Alter Ego™

THE FULL, UNFETTERED, SOLD-OUT FIVE-ISSUE RETURN OF

ROY THOMAS' Legendary Comics Fanzine!

Plus: Dozens of Pages of NEW Material Featuring Rare Art by

JOE KUBERT

JACK KIRBY

CARMINE INFANTINO

WALLY WOOD

FRANK ROBBINS

DAVE HOOVER

and More!!!

BONUS!

NEW and PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED!

ROY THOMAS' IN-DEPTH 1999 INTERVIEW WITH GIL KANE!

All characters ©2001 DC Comics.

$15.95 In The US

ISBN 1-893905-06-3

9 781893 905061 51595

Alter Ego™

THE COMIC BOOK ARTIST COLLECTION

Green Lantern, Hawkman ©2001 DC Comics.

Dedicated to the memory of
Gil Kane

Alter Ego—The Comic Book Artist Collection
Published by TwoMorrows Publishing • 1812 Park Drive • Raleigh, North Carolina 27605
First Printing • March 2001 • ISBN 1-893905-06-3

Frontispiece: *Green Lantern sketch by Gil Kane, courtesy of Eric Predoehl; Golden Age Hawkman illo by Joe Kubert. [Characters ©2001 DC Comics.]*

Above: *The first drawing ever done for the original* A/E *"Volume 1" by a pro, back in 1962! 'Twas by Jack "King" Kirby, no less—that's what we call starting off at the top! (Inking was by* A/E*'s founding editor, Jerry Bails.)* [Art ©2001 Estate of Jack Kirby; The Thing ©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

Opposite page, clockwise (from top left): *Appearing in* A/E *V2 #2, Gil Kane's layout for the splash of an unpublished issue of* Secret Origins *in the mid-1980s. Used by permission. [Firebrand ©2001 DC Comics.] A beautiful Joe Kubert illustration of Hawkman which was used in* A/E *V2#1, courtesy of Joe and the ever-diligent Al Dellinges. [Hawkman ©2001 DC Comics.] Detail of* The Avengers *#97 cover by Gil Kane (pencils) and Bill Everett (inks). Batman pencil drawing by Neal Adams. [Firebrand art ©2001 Elaine Kane; Hawkman art ©2001 Joe Kubert, Batman art ©2001 Neal Adams; Firebrand, Hawkman, Batman ©2001 DC Comics; The Avengers and related characters ©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]*

Printed in Canada

Alter-Ego™
THE COMIC BOOK™ ARTIST COLLECTION

Alter Ego™ THE COMIC BOOK ARTIST COLLECTION™

Table of Contents

Editor
ROY THOMAS

Consulting Editors
JON B. COOKE (FOR CBA)
JOHN MORROW

Associate Editor
BILL SCHELLY

Design & Layout
JON B. COOKE
GREAT SWAMP GRAPHICS

Editors Emeritus
JERRY G. BAILS, FOUNDER
RONN FOSS BILJO WHITE
MIKE FRIEDRICH

Covers
JOE KUBERT SHELDON MOLDOFF

Cover(s) Color
TOM ZIUKO

Special Thanks
NEAL ADAMS AL BIGLEY
SCOTT BLOOM JERRY K. BOYD
AL BRADFORD LEN BROWN
LYNDA FOX COHEN E.R. CRUZ
AL DELLINGES STEVE DITKO
SHELTON DRUM STEVE ENGLEHART
TOM FAGAN JOHN FLESKES
CARL GAFFORD SAM GAFFORD
MICHAEL T. GILBERT DICK GIORDANO
RICHARD "GRASS" GREEN
BOB "KEITH" GREENE
DAVID G. HAMILTON
GEORGE HAGENAUER RON HARRIS
DAVE HOOVER TOM HORVITZ
GIL KANE DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT
JOE KUBERT STAN LEE VICTOR LIM
RUSS MAHERAS DENNIS MALLONEE
JOE & NADIA MANNARINO
MIKE MCPEEK SHELDON MOLDOFF
DEAN MULLANEY TOM PALMER
ETHAN ROBERTS ROBIN SNYDER
DAVID SPURLOCK DANIEL TESMOINGT
ROBERT THOMS DANN THOMAS
HAMES WARE PETER SANDERSON
MICHAEL J. VASSALLO
DWIGHT JON ZIMMERMAN

ALTER EGO V.2 #1:

COVER —HAWKMAN BY JOE KUBERT 6

THE ALTERED EGO: AN EDITORIAL OF SORTS 7
Like, who knew where the whole thing was gonna *lead*?

A BRIEF ODE TO JOE KUBERT 8
Giving kudos to one of the greatest cartoonists ever

ALTER EGO/COMIC BOOK ARTIST COLLECTION EXTRA!

SIX DECADES OF KUBERT ART 9
From Volton to Hawkman to Tor to Tarzan!

THE FOX AND THE FANS: LETTERS TO GARDNER FOX (1959-1965) 17
Michael T. Gilbert pores over missives in the Fox Archives

"IT WAS THIRTY YEARS AGO TODAY..." 22
The story of the late-'60s Topps super-hero spoofs

ALTER EGO/COMIC BOOK ARTIST COLLECTION EXTRA!

WALLY WOOD PARODIES! 23
"Sub-Marine Man" & "Blunder Woman"—not seen in *AE/CBA* #1-5.

THE TOPPS DC PARODIES 25
By Wally Wood, Gil Kane, Art Spiegelman, Len Brown, & Roy Thomas

ALTER EGO V.2 #2:

COVER—GIL KANE DRAWS HIS GREATEST PRE-1970 HEROES 30

RASHOMON, MON AMOUR: THE TROUBLE WITH MEMORY 31
Writer/editorial by Roy Thomas (mixing Kurasawa and Resnais)

A FANTASTIC FIRST! THE CREATION OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR—AND BEYOND! 32
Stan Lee annotates the plots of *F.F.* #1 & #8!

INTERNAL AFFAIRS: DC IN THE 1940S 38
More Gardner Fox letters unveiled by Michael T. Gilbert

OKAY, AXIS, HERE WE COME—AGAIN! 42
The 1970s retro-birth of The Invaders, by Roy Thomas

ALTER EGO/COMIC BOOK ARTIST COLLECTION EXTRA!

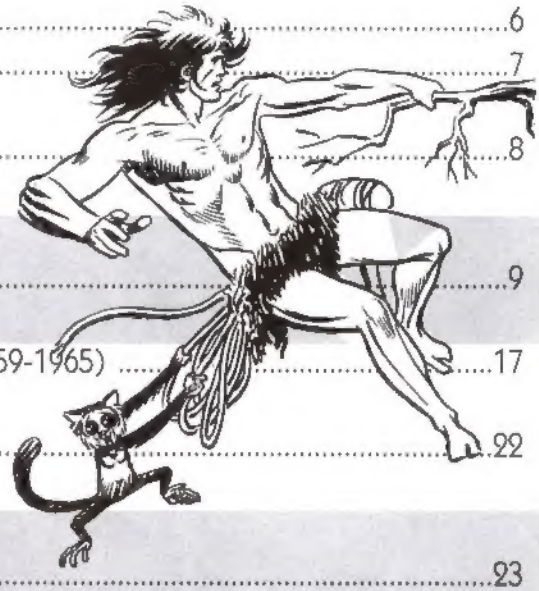
THE ART OF THE INVADERS 45
Original art by Jack Kirby, Frank Robbins, and Dave Hoover

(MOST OF) THE TOPPS MARVEL PARODIES 51
Four more by Kane, Wood, and company—but where's The Hulk?

ALTER EGO V.2 #3:

THE ALTERED EGO — WRITER/EDITORIAL 55
Presenting *A/E*'s marvelous mascots—four for the price of one!

RE: LETTERS TO YE WRITER/EDITOR 55
Mike Higgins, David Anthony Kraft, and others



AN INSIDER'S PART OF COMICS HISTORY 56
Jack Kirby's Spider-Man, as remembered by Steve Ditko

"DRAW FOR COMIC BOOKS! LEARN AND EARN IN YOUR SPARE TIME—AT HOME!" 60
When Joe Kubert & Norman Maurer taught drawing comics by mail!

CLASSIC FANZINE SPOTLIGHT: BATMANIA 66
Bill Schelly on the 1960s fanzine—and an amazing 1965 letter from Bob Kane

"HI! I'M YOUR HOST, TOM FAGAN!" 74
An interview with the man who led the Rutland, Vermont, parades

ONCE UPON A HALLOWEEN 78
Carl Gafford examines the "Rutland Stories" in 1970s comics

THUNDER OVER HOLLYWOOD 82
Roy Thomas on Captain Thunder and Blue Bolt in Tinseltown

THE TOPPS KING FEATURES PARODIES 87
The rest of the Wood/Kane spoofs— including the Inedible Bulk!

ALTER EGO V.2 #4:

COVER—THE JSA SPIES ON MICHAEL T. GILBERT'S MR. MONSTER 92

WRITER/EDITORIAL: X MARKS THE SPOT 93
A fond but somewhat variant memoir of the Thomas-Adams years

RE: JUST TIME FOR A CAUSTIC COMMENT 94

MUTANT MEMORIES, OR: "WRITE PRETTY, ROY!" 95
Roy Thomas remembers the Thomas-Adams *X-Men*

EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC: THE GARDNER FOX LETTERS, PART THREE 102
Michael T. Gilbert examines some truly odd mail

A (RARE) INTERVIEW WITH STEVE DITKO 107
Bill Schelly's Classic Fanzine Spotlight falls on Mr. D.

WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE INTERGALACTIC WAR, DADDY? 109
Roy Thomas gives a walking tour of the Kree-Skrull War — illumined by lots of Neal Adams pencils

ALTER EGO V.2 #5:

COVER—ARLEN SCHUMER ILLUSTRATES THE ORIGINS OF BATMAN 121

WRITER/EDITORIAL: YET ANOTHER YEAR OF THE BAT 122
A modest proposal.

RE: LETTERS TO THE WRITER/EDITOR 123
Gene Colan art, plus, Steve Englehart and Roy Thomas give each other the finger

THE "BAT-MAN" COVER STORY 124
Arlen Schumer's tale of the Caped Crusader that could have been

REAL FACTS & TRUE LIES 126
Arlen Schumer yet again— on *Real Fact Comics* #5

FROM MARS TO ZAMBOULA 129
The Thomas-Adams Collaborations on "War of the Worlds" and *Conan*

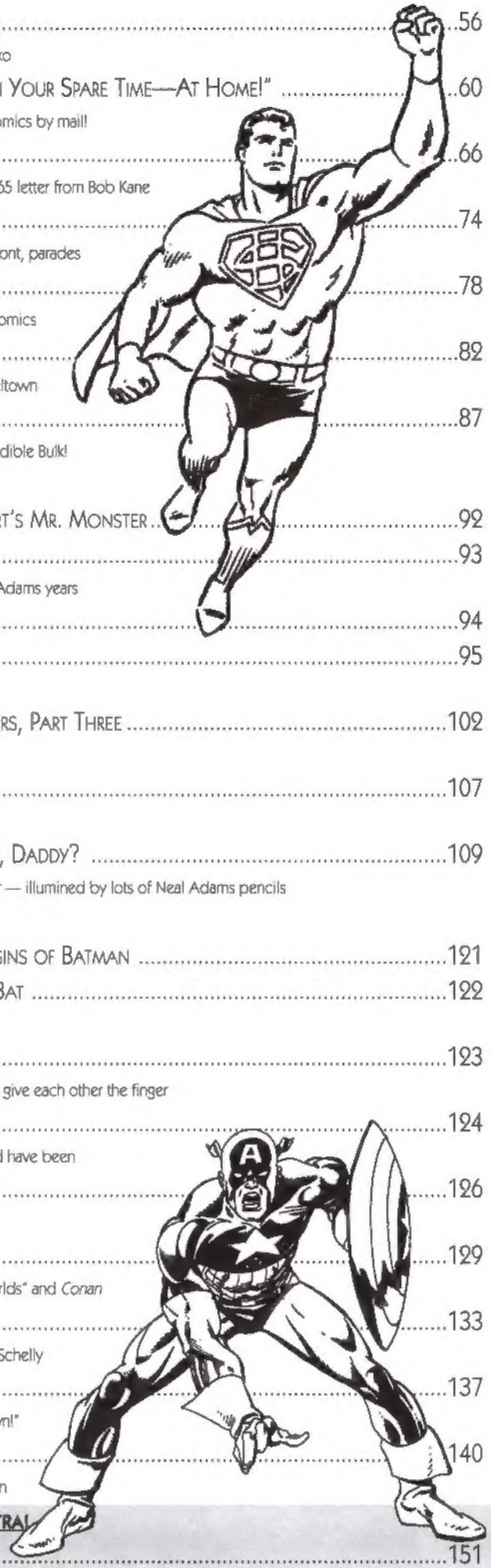
MY YEARS WITH BATMAN 133
Shelly Moldoff, Bob Kane's ghost, interviewed by Bill Schelly

BATMAN'S BAD TRIP 137
Bill Schelly takes a personal look at "Robin Dies at Dawn!"

INTERVIEW WITH FRED FINGER 140
Dwight Zimmerman's conversation with Bill Finger's son

ALTER EGO/COMIC BOOK ARTIST COLLECTION EXTRA!

"THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULDN'T DO!" 151
Gil Kane in a never-before-published 1999 interview by Roy Thomas



Opposite and this page: *Vignettes of classic art appearing inside. Tor and Chee-Chee by Joe Kubert [©2001 the artist], Red Skull by Jack Kirby and Frank Giacoia [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.], Stuporman by Wally Wood [©2001 Topps, Inc.], and Captain America by Gil Kane [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.].*

About Our Front Cover:
In 1981 Joe Kubert drew this Solomon Grundy slug-fest to be the cover of All-Star Squadron *#3. However, interior penciler Rich Buckler understandably desired to draw the cover himself, which left this powerful Kubert illo unpublished until* The Young All-Stars Annual *#1-and-only in 1988. Joe had generously sent it to Roy and Dann Thomas as a wedding gift in 1981; but in '88 some acquisitive staffer apparently pilfered it when Roy loaned it to DC for shooting. (Sob!) Well, at least it's finally being used as a cover! [©2001 DC Comics.]*

And, Finally, about Our Back Cover:
Artist Sheldon Moldoff ("Shelly") was firmly identified with Hawkman from 1940-1944— and was just as firmly unidentified as Bob Kane's ghost on Batman art from 1953-1968. Shelly's cover for A/E V2#3 was printed inside, in black-&-white, so that Neal Adams' wraparound X-Men panorama could grace Comic Book Artist *#3; so this is its first rendering in color. And you don't even have to stand on your head to look at it! [Art ©2001 Sheldon Moldoff; Batman & Hawkman ©2001 DC Comics.]*

COPYRIGHT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:
Aquaman, The Atom, Batgirl, Batman, Bat Mite, Batwoman, Captain Atom, Captain Marvel, Catwoman, Dr. Fate, Dr. Midnite, Don Caballero, Enemy Ace, Firebrand, Green Arrow, Green Lantern, Guardian, Hawkman, Hawkwoman, Hawkgirl, Hourman, The Joker, Man-Bat, Newsboy Legion, Johnny Quick, Johnny Thunder, Justice Society of America, The Penguin, Poison Ivy, The Ray, Rex the Wonder Dog, Robin, Sgt. Rock, Solomon Grundy, Two-Face, Viking Prince, Wildcat, Wonder Woman ©2001 DC Comics. All-Winners Squad, Ant-Man, The Avengers, The Beast, Bucky, Captain America, Captain Marvel, Crystal, Daredevil, The Defenders, Dr. Strange, Fantastic Four, Hela, The Hulk, The Human Torch, The Invaders, Invisible Woman, Ka-Zar, Killraven, The Liberty Legion, The Lizard, Luke Cage, Millie the Model, Mr. Fantastic, Morbius, Nighthawk, Patsy & Hedy, Red Skull, Rawhide Kid, Rick Jones, Sgt. Fury, Scarlet Witch, Spider-Man, Sub-Mariner, Sunfire, The Thing, Thor, Toro, Two-Gun Kid, U-Man, Union Jack, Valkyrie, The Vision, War of the Worlds, West Coast Avengers, The X-Men ©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc. Tor ©2001 Joe Kubert. Tarzan ©2001 Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. Badman, The Bantam, Blunder Woman, Captive American, Fantastic Fear, The Flush, Hunk, Jester's League of America, The Lone Rancher, Mandrain, Prince Violet, Stuporman, Sub-Marine Man, Spider-Guy, Tarsam, Thaw ©2001 Topps, Inc. EC Comics material ©2001 William Gaines, Agent, Inc. Archie, Hangman, The Shield ©2001 Archie Publications, Inc. Black Cat, Buddah, The Golem, Scarlet Phantom, Thun'da, Viva Zapata, Volton, Warrior of Llam, Zebra, Zorro ©2001 their respective copyright holders. Blackmark, His Name Is... Savage ©2001 Elaine Kane. Alter Ego, Captain Thunder & Blue Bolt ©2001 Roy & Dann Thomas. Mr. Monster ©2001 Michael T. Gilbert. The Shadow ©2001 Condé Nast. The Three Stooges ©2001 Comedy III, Inc. Flash Gordon, The Phantom ©2001 King Features Syndicate. Conan ©2001 Conan Properties, Inc.

COMIC BOOK ARTIST Presents

Alter Ego™

$5.95
In The US

Vol. 2, No. 1
Spring 1998

The Return of the Legendary Comics Fanzine edited by ROY THOMAS!

IN THIS ISSUE:

Michael T. Gilbert on the Life & Letters of GARDNER FOX

Super-hero Parodies by WALLY WOOD, GIL KANE, ART SPIEGELMAN, ROY THOMAS & LEN BROWN

Unpublished Art of the JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA

An Ode to JOE KUBERT

Hawkman ©2001 DC Comics

The Altered Ego

AN EDITORIAL OF SORTS

by Roy Thomas

[**2001 SPECIAL NOTE:** *Welcome to* Alter Ego: The Comic Book Artist Collection! *This editorial has been abridged and somewhat rewritten from its original form in* A/E, *Vol. 2, #1, which was published in Spring 1998 as a "flipped" (upside-down) section of the then-new (but soon Eisner Award-winning) magazine* Comic Book Artist, *edited by Jon B. Cooke for TwoMorrows Publishing. None of us wanted to confuse potential readers of* this *compilation by calling it "Volume Two"—'cause they were likely to wonder how they missed "Volume One"—hence our equally accurate subtitle,* The CBA Collection.—**R.T.**]

Welcome to this second volume of *Alter Ego,* the first super-hero comics fanzine.

For those readers too young to remember 1961—which may well be most of you—this may be the place to mention that *Alter Ego* began life (as one hyphenated word) during the first springtime of the JFK Presidency.

What would now be considered "Volume One" of *A/E* was the brainchild of Dr. Jerry G. Bails, then a young associate professor of natural science at Wayne State University, Detroit, with my college-morassed self as titular "co-editor" (read: other major contributor).

Jerry Bails (left) and Roy Thomas, the originators of the 1960s Alter Ego, *exchange reminiscences at the Fandom Reunion Luncheon held in conjunction with the Chicago Comicon in July of '97. (Photo by Russ Maheras.)*

The fanzine's informal midwives were DC editor Julius Schwartz and writer Gardner F. Fox, two of the greats of the so-called Silver Age of Comics—and of the Golden Age before it, come to that.

Between 1961 and 1978, over the course of eleven sporadically-appearing issues, "Volume One" of *A/E* was published first by Jerry (#1-4)—then by fan/artist Ronn Foss (#5-6)—then by Yours Truly (#7-10), with Biljo White as art editor of #7-9—with a final issue (#11) from Mike Friedrich, which I co-edited. In 1986 I also wrote a four-issue comic book series about a super-hero named *Alter Ego* for First Comics; it can be viewed on the Internet at *www.heroicpub.com/alterego,* courtesy of Dennis Mallonee.

A/E's checkered history was related, amid a sampling of items from its seventeen years, in the modestly-titled (and now out-of-print) 1997 book *Alter Ego: The Best of the Legendary Comics Fanzine,* edited by Bill Schelly and myself.

A brief self-introduction may be in order:

Since 1965, I've been a comic writer (and often editor): from 1965-80 exclusively for Marvel—from 1981-86 primarily for DC—and since 1987 as a freelancer for DC, Marvel, Topps, First, Pacific, Heroic, *et al.* I've garnered a few movie and TV credits, as well. Over the years I suppose I've been most identified with *The Avengers* and *Conan* at Marvel—with various permutations of DC's fabled Justice Society—and with the World War II exploits of both Marvel and DC super-heroes. [**2001 NOTE:** *I currently write for Dude Comics (a Spanish company) and Cross Plains Comics (Robert E. Howard material), as well as an occasional graphic novel for DC and book-intros for DC, Marvel, and Planeta (Barcelona).*]

Along the way, because of the happy accident of when and how I blundered into comics, I've been privileged to work with many of the all-time greats: Stan Lee, Julius Schwartz, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Gardner Fox, Gil Kane, John Romita, John Buscema, Bill Everett, Mort Weisinger, Wally Wood, Archie Goodwin, Dick Giordano, *et al.*—and that doesn't even count the talented guys who came along *after* me.

For most of the time since '65, I've had to sidetrack the fannish interests which initially inspired me in favor of making a living. Yet I never lost my awe of the giants of comics' early years, or my desire to chronicle both their deeds and those of my contemporaries.

So when, in early 1998, I saw an ad for a forthcoming new magazine called *Comic Book Artist,* from the same TwoMorrows group that publishes the excellent *Jack Kirby Collector*—and read that *CBA* #2 was slated to examine "the overlooked work of such greats as" a number of 1970s creators, including my allegedly-neglected self—I dropped a line to *TJKC* publisher John Morrow, who after all lives only one Carolina away from me.

John forwarded my letter to Jon B. Cooke, editor of *Comic Book Artist*—and, after a few faxes back and forth, Jon stunned me by offering me some of *CBA*'s pages for a new edition of *Alter Ego,* with its very own cover. Shocked though I was, I accepted at once.

I'll use each *A/E* segment to spotlight the artwork and information I've salted away over the years, primarily in three major areas:

1) The Golden Age of Comics, by which I mean anything from the 1930s up to, say, the creation of the second Flash in 1956;

2) Those aspects of the Silver Age and beyond, from '56 till the day after yesterday, of which I have personal knowledge, either as active participant or as bemused spectator.

3) Certain material from early fandom which I feel deserves a new audience. (In this area I'm greatly dependent on Bill Schelly, author of *The Golden Age of Comic Fandom.*)

An eclectic mix—but then, *Alter Ego* was *always* an eclectic magazine, and the new *A/E* will proudly continue that grab-bag tradition.

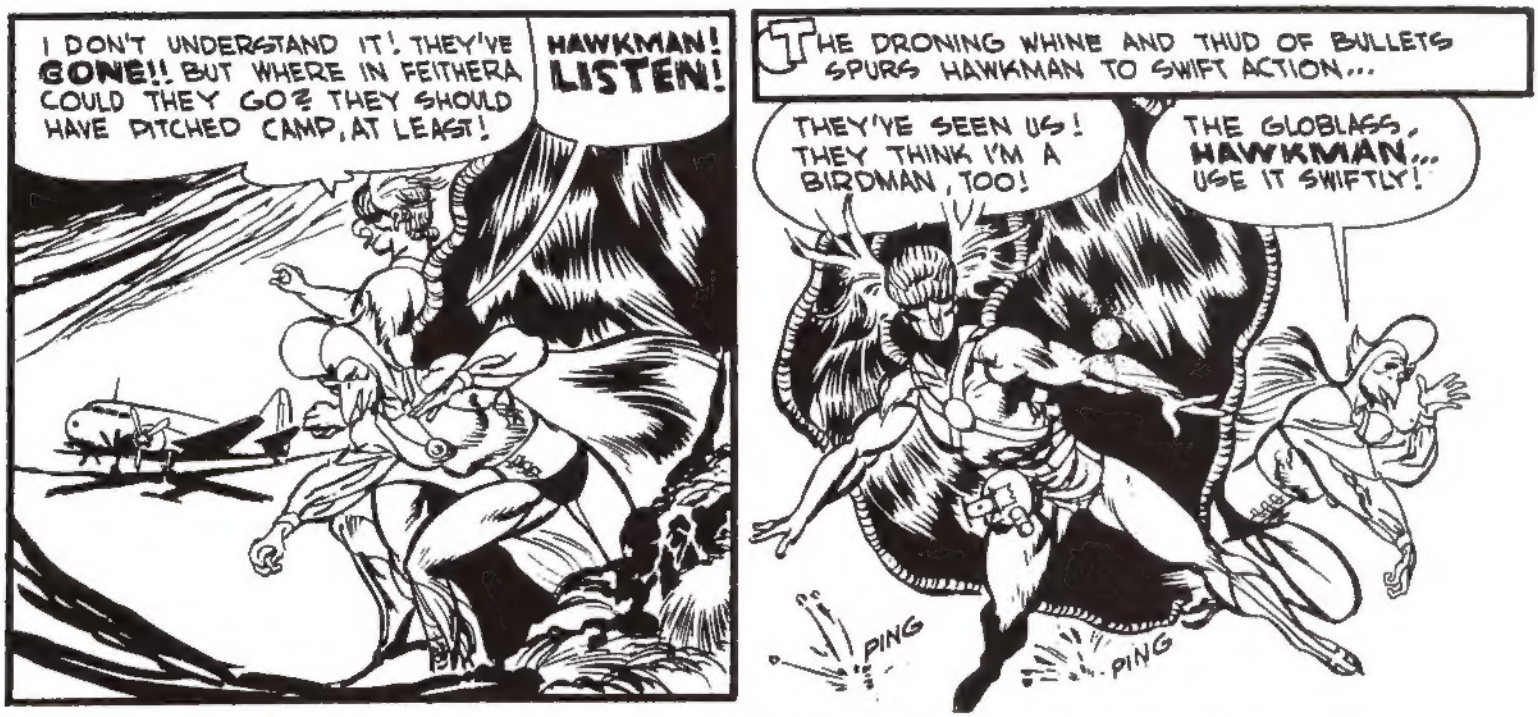
Alter Ego is back, and we hope you enjoy it.

Roy

[**P.S.:** Special thanks to Bill Schelly and Joe Kubert for their blessing to use the Hawkman illo on the preceding page as our cover for *A/E* V2#1.]

A Brief Ode to Joe Kubert

GIVING KUDOS TO ONE OF THE GREATEST CARTOONISTS OF ALL TIME


I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT! THEY'VE GONE!! BUT WHERE IN FEITHERA COULD THEY GO? THEY SHOULD HAVE PITCHED CAMP, AT LEAST!
HAWKMAN! LISTEN!
THE DRONING WHINE AND THUD OF BULLETS SPURS HAWKMAN TO SWIFT ACTION...
THEY'VE SEEN US! THEY THINK I'M A BIRDMAN, TOO!
THE GLOBLASS, HAWKMAN... USE IT SWIFTLY!
PING
PING

Joe's early but very dynamic Hawkman, from Flash Comics *#71, 1946. [Reprinted from the original art, from the collection of R.T.]*

From a personal point of view, it's only fitting that the new *A/E*'s first cover be a Hawkman illustration by Joe Kubert.

Since the age of five, when I learned to read pre-school largely from comics, Kubert has been my all-time favorite comics artist, bar none—and the Golden Age Hawkman has been my all-time favorite super-hero (rivaled only, since 1961, by Marvel's Thing).

I was fortunate, as a child, that Joe was one of the relatively few comics artists who signed stories he drew. But his artwork was so individual, so singular, so powerful, that I'd have recognized it anywhere, just as I did the work of Simon and Kirby and a few other strong stylists.

Sure, when lesser artists drew Hawkman in *Flash Comics* and *All-Star Comics*, I still enjoyed the stories; but no 1950s *Uncle Scrooge* fan ever pined more fervently for the return of "the good duck artist" than I did for Joe Kubert to come back to the Winged Wonder—and he did, persevering right up to *Flash*'s demise in 1949.

In 1946, at the tender age of six, I don't suppose I'd have been too shocked to learn Joe was just turning twenty when he drew the accompanying panels from *Flash* #71, because at that time twenty would have seemed quite old to me.

But when, in 1953, a comic called *One Million Years Ago* hit the newsstands, starring a caveman named Tor, with artwork that blended realism, grace, and dynamism in a perfect marriage of style and substance, even I had to admit that Kubert's stellar work on Hawkman had been surpassed—by Kubert himself. *Flash* #73 and *Tor* #3 remain my favorite comic book covers which don't feature the Justice Society. When I saw the original artwork for that *Tor* cover on sale at the 1997 Chicago Comicon for $5500, a part of me wanted to re-mortgage my house and snap it up.

Joe himself, of course, would understandably feel he's gone on to bigger and continually better things over the years, and there's a strong objective possibility that he may even be right:

His "Viking Prince" was the high point of DC's *The Brave and the Bold* in the 1950s, and it's a pity the entire series hasn't been reprinted. He became the War artist *par excellence* when he teamed with Robert Kanigher (co-creator of "Viking Prince") on "Sgt. Rock of Easy Company" and later "Enemy Ace" for DC's battle mags. His six-issue stint in the early '60s on the Silver Age Hawkman rivaled his best work anywhere, anytime. His 1970s "Tarzan" ranks alongside that of Foster and Hogarth. The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art has trained a generation plus of top-notch comics artists, including his talented sons Andy and Adam.

Even today, at the ripe (but not old!) age of 71—a cold statistic which seems belied every time I run into this vital, eternally enthusiastic artist and entrepreneur—his recent graphic novel *Fax from Sarajevo* should make certain artists blush with shame when they hawk their latest little-head/ big-body/bigger-guns chicken-scratchings as some new ultimate in comic art.

Joe's *been* there, at the summit—for well over half a century now—and he's still going strong!

— Roy Thomas.
March 1, 1998

Six Decades of Kubert Art

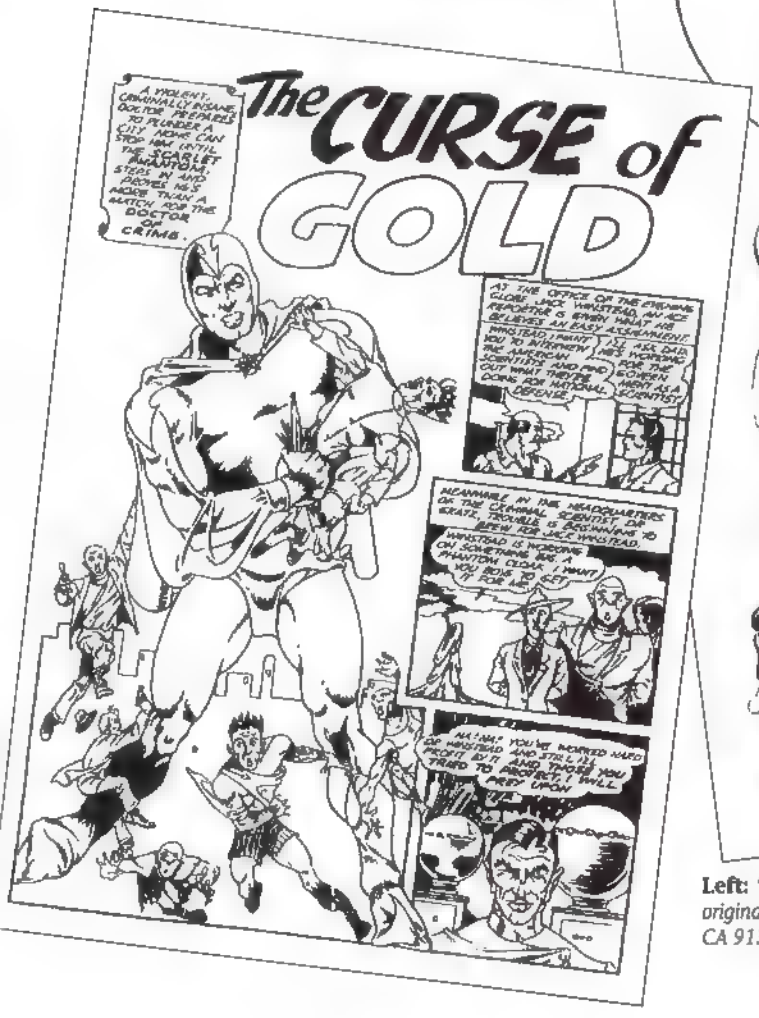
FROM VOLTON TO HAWKMAN TO TOR TO TARZAN!

In the original *A/E* V2#1 in *Comic Book Artist* #1, we had room for only the previous page's passing homage to its cover artist, Joe Kubert. This was largely because we had originally intended for the cover of our first demi-issue to be the 1970 Gil Kane drawing which eventually was used on V2#2, which would feature a bit more of Gil's artwork. At the eleventh hour, Bill Schelly sent Ye Editor a copy of the Kubert Hawkman illo which wound up gracing our very first "flip" cover. In this collection we can expand our coverage visually, presenting a number of Kubert pages, some of the original art. (Kubert ultra-fan Al Dellinges has kindly provided photocopies of all art in this section, unless specified otherwise.)

Joe's "big break," clearly was being asked to become the regular artist of the "Hawkman" series when Sheldon Moldoff entered the armed services in mid-1944. But let's take a brief look at a bit of what he'd been up to by that time:

VOLTON
IN THE HOME OF PHINEAS LARRABY, A SUPPOSEDLY DYING MULTI-MILLIONAIRE:
SNIFF, POOR PHINEAS, I HEAR THE DOCTOR SAYS HE'LL NEVER SURVIVE THIS HEART ATTACK!
POOR PHINEAS... GUESS HE'S A GONER... I HEAR HE LEFT ME THIRTY PERCENT OF HIS ESTATE!
HAARMFF! THOSE DARN BLASTED PARASITES—DR NEWTON, THINK YOU'D BETTER BREAK THE NEWS OF MY RECOVERY VERY GENTLY TO THEM!
PHINEAS LARRABY! GET BACK TO BED THIS INSTANT! YOU SHOULD BE THANKFUL YOU LIVED THROUGH THAT HEART ATTACK!
I'VE GOT IT! I'LL CUT THEM ALL OFF IN THOUT A CENT! I'LL SPEND ALL MY MONEY BUILDING A BOYS CLUB ON MONMOUTH CORNERS!
NO PARKING
HELLO JOE MORGAN? CAN'T SELL YOU MONMOUTH CORNERS UNCLE LARRABY PULLED THROUGH! MAY BE WE'LL HAVE BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME!

Right: *"Volton," one of Joe's first art assignments; his second splash page for the series is from* Catman *#10 (May 1942). [©2001 the respective copyright holder.]*


The CURSE of GOLD
A VIOLENT, CRIMINALLY INSANE DOCTOR PREPARES TO PLUNDER A CITY! NOTHING CAN STOP HIM UNTIL THE SCARLET PHANTOM STEPS IN AND PROVES HE'S MORE THAN A MATCH FOR THE DOCTOR OF CRIME.
AT THE OFFICE OF THE PHENIX GLOBE JACK WINSTEAD, AN ACE REPORTER IS WHEN WHAT HE BELIEVES AN EASY ASSIGNMENT.
WINSTEAD, I WANT YOU TO INTERVIEW THE AMERICAN SCIENTISTS AND FIND OUT WHAT THEY'RE DOING FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE.
ALL DAD... HE'S PREPARING FOR THE COMING ATTACK OF ALIEN SCIENTISTS!
MEANWHILE, IN THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE CRIMINAL SCIENTIST, DR. KRATZ, TROUBLE IS BEGINNING TO BREW FOR JACK WINSTEAD.
WINSTEAD IS MOCKING ON SCHEDULE BUT A PHANTOM CLOAK HAUNT MY BOYS TO GET HIM FOR ME.
AH HA! YOU'VE SNOOPED AND PROFITED BY IT AND STILL YOU TRIED TO ESCAPE? I WILL TREAT YOU AS THOSE WHO PREY UPON
END

Left: *"The Scarlet Phantom" appeared in* All New Short Story Comics *#2 (March 1943); original art for this splash courtesy of Tom Horvitz' TRH Gallery, 18324 Clark St., #223, Tarzana, CA 91356; phone (818) 757-0747, fax (818) 757-0859. [©2001 the respective copyright holder.]*

100 THE BIG ALL-AMERICAN COMIC BOOK
HAWKMAN
BY JOE KUBERT
A HOT TIME IN THE OLD TOWN
IN A GLASS-WALLED ROOM SOMEWHERE IN TOWN A MAN BREATHES DEEPLY OF HOT SCENTED AIR
AHH HEAT! HEAT! THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IT TO KEEP A MAN GOING! ONLY WHEN IT'S COMFORTABLE LIKE THIS CAN REALLY WORK!
ALL MY LIFE I'VE DREADED THE COLD IT NUMBS ME PARALYZES MY HANDS AND FEET WHEN IT GETS TO 80° I SHUDDER AND SHAKE — BUT WHEN IT'S COMFORTABLE LIKE THIS I REALLY LIVE!
WHEW! IT SURE IS HOT IN HERE! WHAT'S ON TODAY'S PROGRAM HOT SHOT?
I'VE LOOKED UP SOMETHING EXTRA SPECIAL FOR TONIGHT SLICK — A NICE HEART-WARMING FOREST-FIRE!

THIS TREMENDOUS SCULPTURE ESTABLISHES BEYOND A DOUBT, THAT OUR ANCESTORS WERE A GREAT PEOPLE BUDDHA! I HEAR SHINTO WILL LOSE MANY FOLLOWERS NOW!
YOUR OPINION, IMMORTAL DESCENDANT-OF-THE-SUN-GODDESS IS LAW! PERHAPS NOW THE SAGE WITH-THE-GLASSES WILL CEASE HIS NONSENSE ABOUT A PETRIFIED MAN!
A PETRIFIED MAN? HOW INTERESTING! YOU THINK THIS MIGHT BE A HUMAN TURNED TO STONE?
OH, NO, YOUR HIGHNESS! YOU SAY IT'S A STATUE— OF COURSE IT'S A STATUE OF BUDDHA BUILT BY OUR WONDERFUL ANCESTORS! OF A CERTAINTY!
SUDDENLY
OH... MY BONES FEEL STIFF!
BY ALL THAT'S SACRED! THE COLOSSUS MOVES!
AND SPEAKS!
HAVE I CONSUMED TOO MUCH SAKI, OR IS THAT STATUE COME TO LIFE!
IT HAS! THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE! IT REALLY IS A HUMAN NOT A STATUE A HUMAN IN A STATE OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION! EXPOSURE TO AIR HAS REVIVED IT!
HMMM? WHERE IN BLAZES AM I! HOW STRANGE THIS COUNTRY IS! — TREES NO TALLER THAN A BLADE OF GRASS AND WHAT ARE THESE TWO-LEGGED INSECTS RUNNING ALL ABOUT!
MARK MY ILLUSTRIOUS WORDS HEADS WILL ROLL FOR THIS
BUT YOUR SACRED HIGHNESS— WE HAD NO IDEA!
WATCH OUT! IT'S GOING TO GRAB US!

YOU FEEL THE BITE OF THIS, LOEW? EH? IT DOES NOT TICKLE EXACTLY! WELL, THINK OF YOUR WIFE AND CHILDREN, LOEW! THINK OF ONE THOUSAND JEWS WHO SHALL DIE THIS NIGHT BY THE TEETH OF A HUNDRED LIONS... IF YOU DO NOT TELL ME WHERE THE GOLEM IS!
THE TEETH OF LIONS IN YOUR WIFE'S NECK, LOEW OR HER FREEDOM! GIVE ME THE SECRET OF BRINGING LIFE TO THE GOLEM, AND SHE WILL NOT BE THE GOLEM, AND SHE WILL NOT BE PUNISHED! ANSWER! YOU, DOG OF A JEW! ANSWER! I AM YOUR EMPEROR! ANSWER ME!!
NEVER! N-NEVER!
VERY WELL! MY GUESTS ARE AWAITING MY PRESENCE AT THE BANQUET! THEY EXPECTED THE ENTERTAINMENT OF SEEING YOUR JEWS DEVOURED AFTER DINNER. WE SHALL RUSH THE HOUR AHEAD! THEY SHALL BE EATEN NOW! I STAY FOR THE SCREAMS, LOEW! THEY WILL BE HEARD IN MUNICH, EVEN!...
OH, GOD, HELP MY PEOPLE IN THIS HOUR OF HORROR! GIVE THE GOLEM LIFE AND LET HIM RESCUE US!
IN THE DUST-GATHERING GLOOM OF THE ALTNEU SYNAGOGUE A STRANGE PHENOMENON OCCURS
CRACK
AND IN ANSWER TO RABBI LOEW'S IMPASSIONED PLEA THE GOLEM WALKS AGAIN
14

Left: *In 1944, after drawing a lone "Dr. Fate" segment in* All-Star Comics *#21, Joe was offered the opportunity to draw the "Hawkman" story in the 128-page, 25¢ one-shot* The Big All-American Comic Book. *Almost immediately, editor Shelly Mayer assigned him to "Hawkman" on a regular basis in* Flash Comics *(beginning with #62) and* All-Star *(#24) as Moldoff's successor. [All art on this page ©2001 DC Comics.]*

Joe never worked solely for DC/AA in those days, however. "Buddha Was a Big Boy" appeared in Speed Comics *#43 (1946); here are its splash, plus a page of original art repro'd from the collection of Roy Thomas. This tale was a warm-up for one of Joe's most fondly remembered 1940s assignments— "The Golem" in* The Challenger *#3 (1945), from Interfaith Publications. For that comic's next issue he drew the biographical "Viva Zapata!" about a Mexican national hero (see page 12, top). Special thanks for the latter pair to Al Dellinges. [©2001 the respective copyright holders.]*

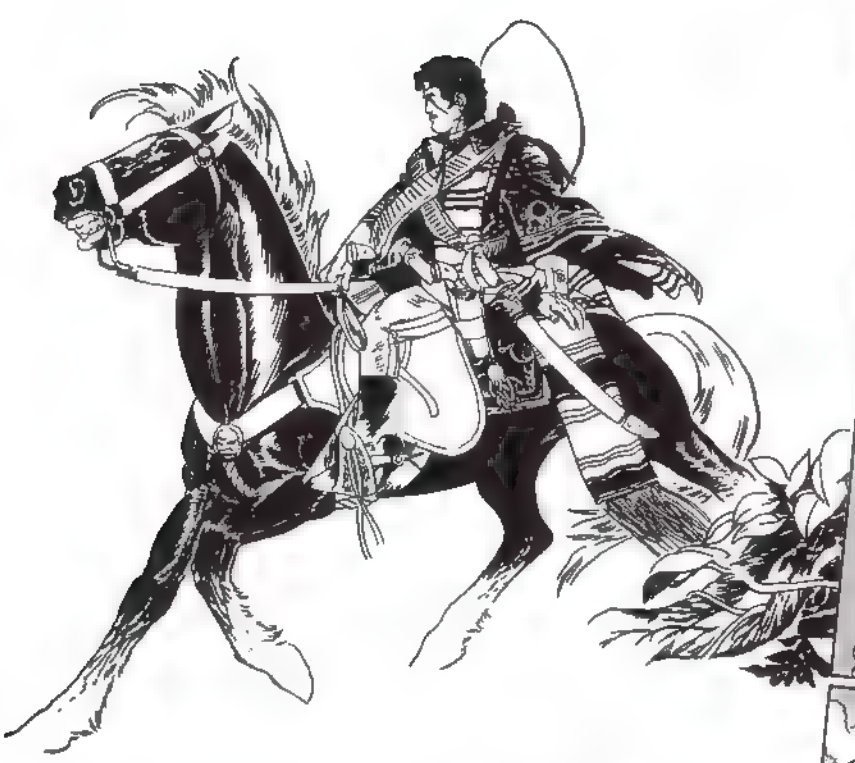
BUDDHA WAS A BIG BOY!
THERE WAS QUITE A LOT OF CONCERN OVER MATTERS OF WAS ACTUALLY THE PERSONAL FEELINGS OF BUDDHA HIMSELF OR SOME SUCH... BUT THIS BURNING QUESTION HAS FINALLY BEEN SETTLED TURNS OUT THAT THE BUDDHA BODY WAS NOT PETRIFIED AT ALL! IT WAS IN A STATE OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION!! THE PROJECT OF THOSE WHO MADE THE AMAZING TRIP OF...
BUDDHA WAS A BIG BOY!

Above: *"Black Cat" from* Speed Comics *#34 (Sept. '44). [©2001 Lorne-Harvey, Inc.]*

Above: *"The Zebra" from* Green Hornet *#20 (Sept. 1944, [©2001 the respective copyright holder.]*

Flash Comics
46
AMAZING!!
TRULY WONDERFUL! YOUR CULTURE IS AS FAR ADVANCED AS HUMAN CULTURE ... YOU MUST MEET OUR LEARNED MEN.
AVOID! MUST NOT MEET THIS BIRD WORLD! OTHERWISE THE BIRDMEN WILL PERISH!
I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN...
NO!! BELIEVE NOT THE LYING WINGED-MAN! TRATA WANTS THE OUTER WORLD TO ENTER PEITHEON! YOU'LL NEVER GET THAT WISH!
THE RAYS OF THE GLOBLASS SPLASH AND SEETHE OVER HAWKMAN WHO STANDS ON THE BRINK OF THE WALL'S EDGE ABOVE A GREAT PRECIPICE...
IF HE LOSES HIS BALANCE THERE, HE'LL BE DASHED TO BITS ON THE ROCKS DOWN BELOW!

Left: *The full Page 6 of the "Hawkman" story "The Land of the Bird People" in* Flash Comics *#71 (May 1946), two panels of which appear on the first page of this tribute, was printed in* A/E *V3#4 (Spring 2000)—so here's Page 8 from that same tale, repro'd from photocopies of the original art, courtesy of Al Dellinges—plus* (**above**) *that issue's cover, and of* Flash *#73 (July '46), which, as per Roy's "Ode," is one of his all-time favorites. [©2001 DC Comics.]*

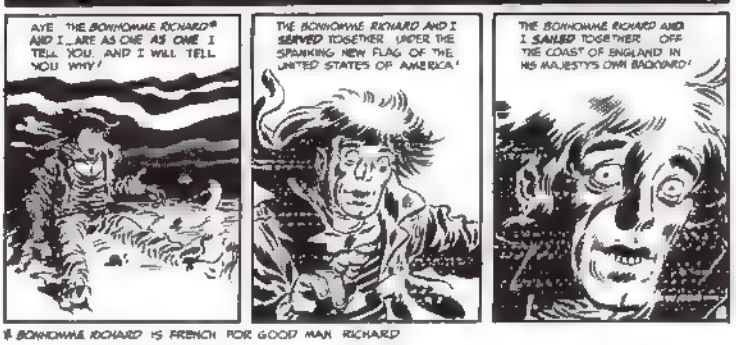


PACK A C-2 STICK DOWN AT THE BASE!
POM
POM
NOW A COUPLE HALF HITCHES AND
BOM
BLAM
HEY! WHY DON'T THEM GUYS GIVE THE STAND CLEAR SIGNAL WHEN THEY BLOW THE CHARGE
NO!
NO THEY DIDN'T BLOW 'I
GOLLY
GOLLY AN ENEMY SHOT MUST'VE HIT THEIR CHARGE! I-I GUESS THEY'RE BOTH DEAD
COME ON! COME ON! LET'S BLOW THE HEDGE HOGS!
THAT'S THE LAST OF IT!
BWOM
THE SIGNALMAN SEEMS TO BE HAVING TROUBLE WITH THAT MARKER
HEY!
TING TING

Joe drew only three stories for EC. This trio of pages from Two-Fisted Tales *#33-34 and* Frontline Combat *#14 (all 1953) depict a pair of Kubert themes that would recur: the war-combat story (via "Sgt Rock," et al.)—and the chattering, distinctive-looking monkey, who bears a strong resemblance to the Chee-Chee who will be featured in* Tor/One Million Years Ago *that same year. Repro'd from photocopies of original artwork, as reprinted in* The Complete Two-Fisted Tales *and* The Complete Frontline Combat *by Russ Cochran, Publisher. [©2001 William Gaines, Agent, Inc.]*

TORRES STRAITS - OFF THE QUEENSLAND CAPE! TORRES STRAITS OFF THE AUSTRALIAN HORN! HERE ARE THE OLD GROUNDS THE BEDS OF 'SHELL'! AND HERE IS WHERE OUR STORY IS SET! ON THURSDAY ISLAND, LAT. 10° 34' SOUTH, LONG 142° 12 EAST RENDEZVOUS OF THE LUGGER FLEETS, THE.
PEARL DIVERS!
OYSTERS
YOU BRING 'EM UP WE SERVE 'EM UP!
USUAL TIPPLE OF MALAGA EDDIE
USUAL TIPPLE T S
NO CREDIT
FISH 'N CHIPS
Joe Kubert

SO YOU'RE ON THE BEACH, MIKE
BAH I'M TIRED OF WORKING ON A STINKING LUGGER IN A STINKING FLEET! ANYHOW THE OLD GROUNDS ABOUT CLEANED OUT


AYE THE BONHOMME RICHARD* AND I ARE AS ONE AS ONE I TELL YOU AND I WILL TELL YOU WHY!
THE BONHOMME RICHARD AND I SERVED TOGETHER UNDER THE SPANKING NEW FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA!
THE BONHOMME RICHARD AND I SAILED TOGETHER OFF THE COAST OF ENGLAND IN HIS MAJESTY'S OWN BACKYARD!

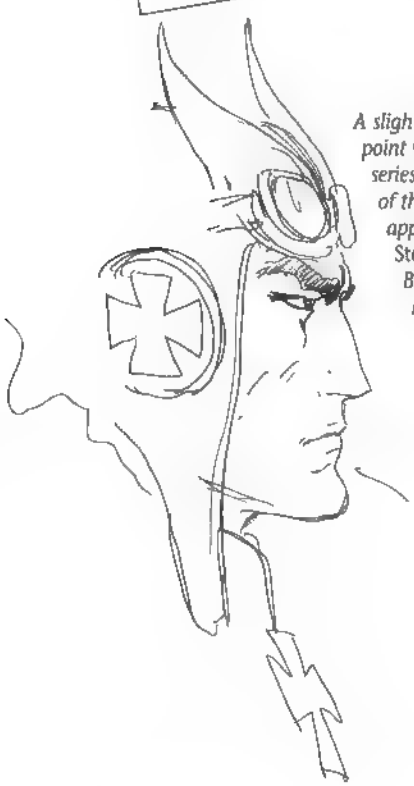
* BONHOMME RICHARD IS FRENCH FOR GOOD MAN RICHARD

Tor, the "caveman" hero who first appeared in comics published by St. John in 1953, was created by Joe on a troop ship bound for Germany in 1950. The cover of Tor *#3, repro'd here from photocopies of the original art, is another of Ye Editor's favorites—and it looks even more spectacular as colored by Joe, as will be seen in a* Tor Archives *volume, to be published by DC Comics. Somebody else must've liked it, too; from the inscriptions, this original art must have changed hands at least twice, and Joe obligingly signed it each time! (And see the imminent* Alter Ego, *Vol. 3, #8, for a cover feature on Kubert's immortal savage!) [©2001 Joe Kubert.]*

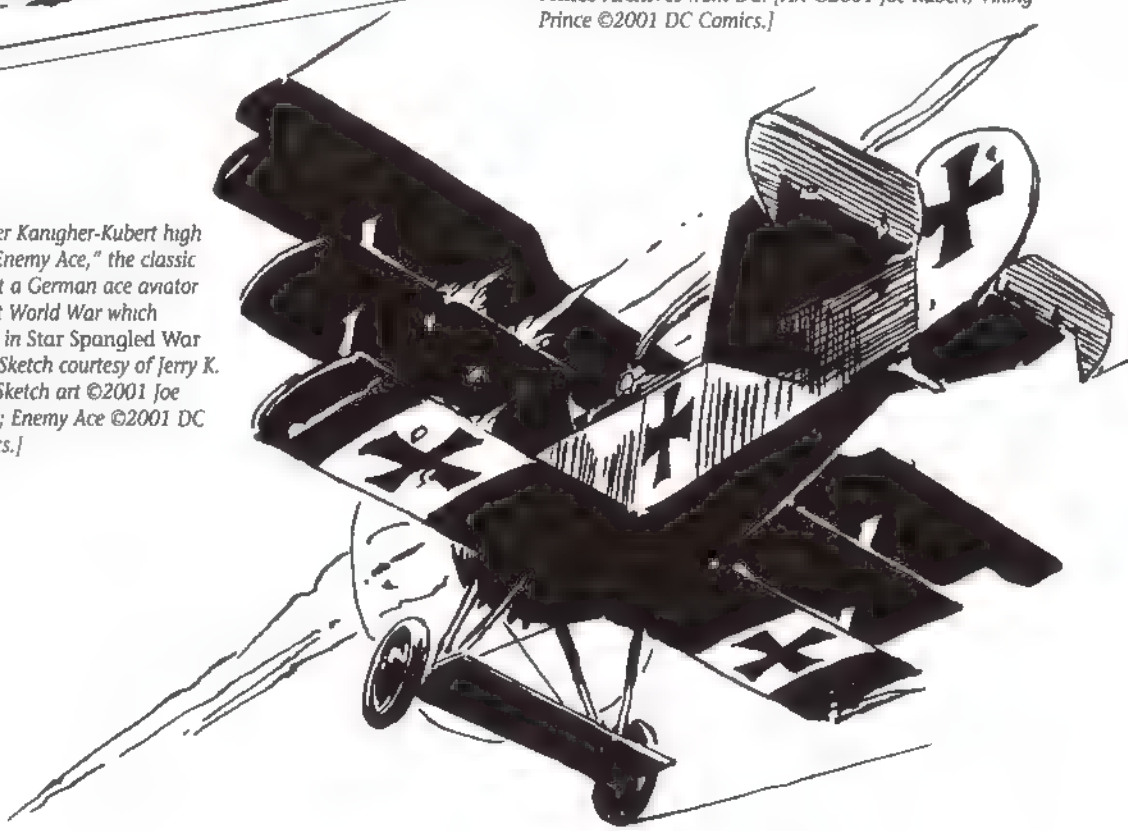
THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD
To Ethan - with best regards
Like a sail - the billowing cloak gently carries the Viking Prince and the mute bard to the bottom of the frozen waterfall ...
Sorcery froze the river so quickly! But it is now a fine road to continue our search for a rose to be awakened! - though surely no flower could bloom in this frigid land!
Walk - walk -- further into the traps of the ice king!
Shortly...
Behold! What are those strange shapes?
These are ghostly warriors of the ice king's legion, my blade has no effect on them!

Left: *On the heels of the black-maned* Tor, *Joe drew two dozen exploits of his and Robert Kanigher's blond-tressed "Viking Prince" for* The Brave and the Bold, *beginning with #1 (Aug.-Sept. 1955). This page from #6 (July 1956) is repro'd from photocopies of the original art, courtesy of Ethan Roberts. [©2001 DC Comics.]*

Above: *To accompany this sketch of that mysterious, amnesiac Norseman in Robin Snyder's* History of Comics *(now* Robin Snyder's The Comics*), Vol. 2, #10 (Oct 1991), Joe had this to say about the series: "At the time I drew the Viking Prince, it was just another story—another script executed by Bob the K, who, as far as my memory can discern, was the only writer of the series. I don't mean it was a bad story. Bob's stuff was always a pleasure to draw. I just mean it wasn't anything that I recognized as being 'special,' though I gave it my 'best shot.'" Fortunately, a lot of people since have recognized the series as being* decidedly *special, nor will they rest till there's a* Viking Prince Archives *from DC! [Art ©2001 Joe Kubert; Viking Prince ©2001 DC Comics.]*



A slightly later Kanigher-Kubert high point was "Enemy Ace," the classic series about a German ace aviator of the First World War which appeared in Star Spangled War Stories. *Sketch courtesy of Jerry K. Boyd. [Sketch art ©2001 Joe Kubert; Enemy Ace ©2001 DC Comics.]*

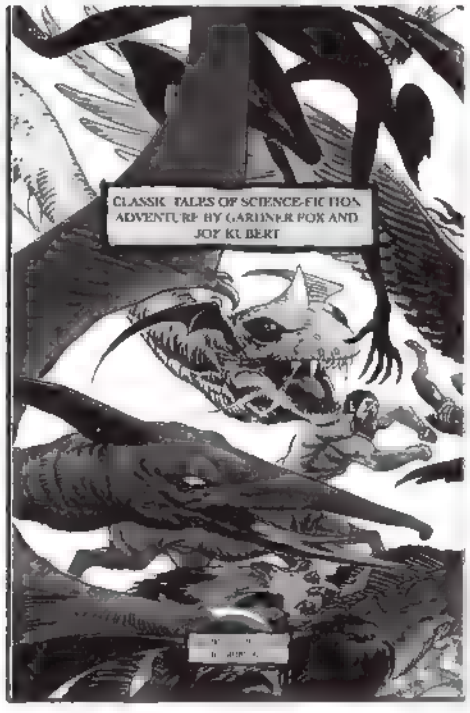


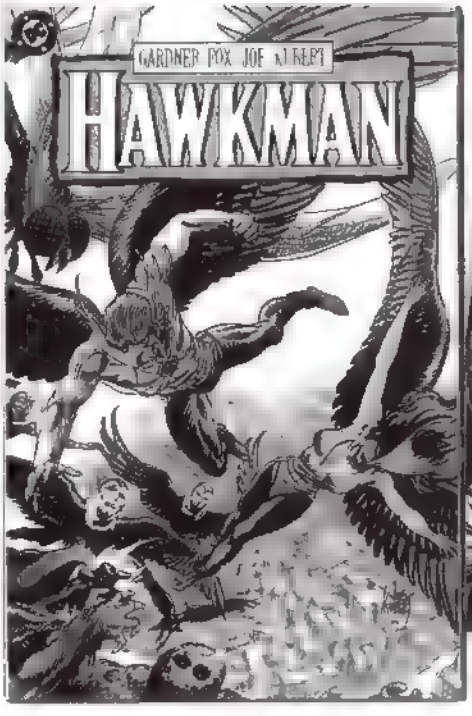
FROM A SPECIAL COMPARTMENT THEY LIFT OUT ALIEN GARMENTS AND DON THEM.
WE'LL EXPLAIN TO THIS COMMISSIONER THAT THESE ARE THE POLICE UNIFORMS WE WEAR ON OUR HOME PLANET, THANAGAR!
EARTH HAS NOTHING LIKE OUR BELTS OF ANTI-GRAVITY METAL!
AFTER ATTACHING WINGS TO THEIR UNIFORMS, THE POLICE DUO OF THANAGAR PLUNGES FROM THEIR SPACECRAFT HATCHWAY..
OUR BODIES HAVE BEEN SPECIALLY TREATED TO WITHSTAND EXTREME TEMPERATURES AND AIR-FRICTION!
ENABLED TO ASCEND AND DESCEND BY MANUAL CONTROLS ON THEIR ANTI-GRAVITY BELTS, THEIR MIGHTY WINGS GOVERN THEIR SPEED AND ANGLE OF FLIGHT...
THIS IS JUST LIKE FLYING AT HOME, KATAR!

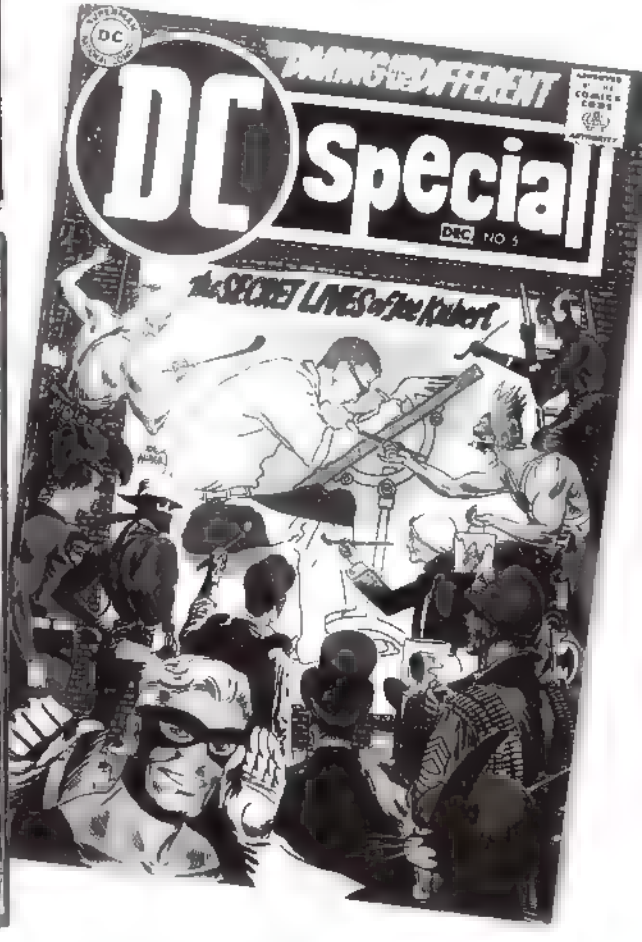
In the early '60s Joe drew a resuscitated "Hawkman," scripted by the Winged Wonder's two-time co-creator, Gardner F. Fox. This page from The Brave and the Bold *#34 (1961), is repro'd from a foreign b-&-w reprint. All six Kubert-drawn B&B "Hawkman" issues were collected in a 1989 trade paperback, with a new wraparound cover (below left)—and again in 2000 in* The Hawkman Archives—Volume 1, *with Murphy Anderson's* Mystery in Space *stories added. [©2001 DC Comics.]*

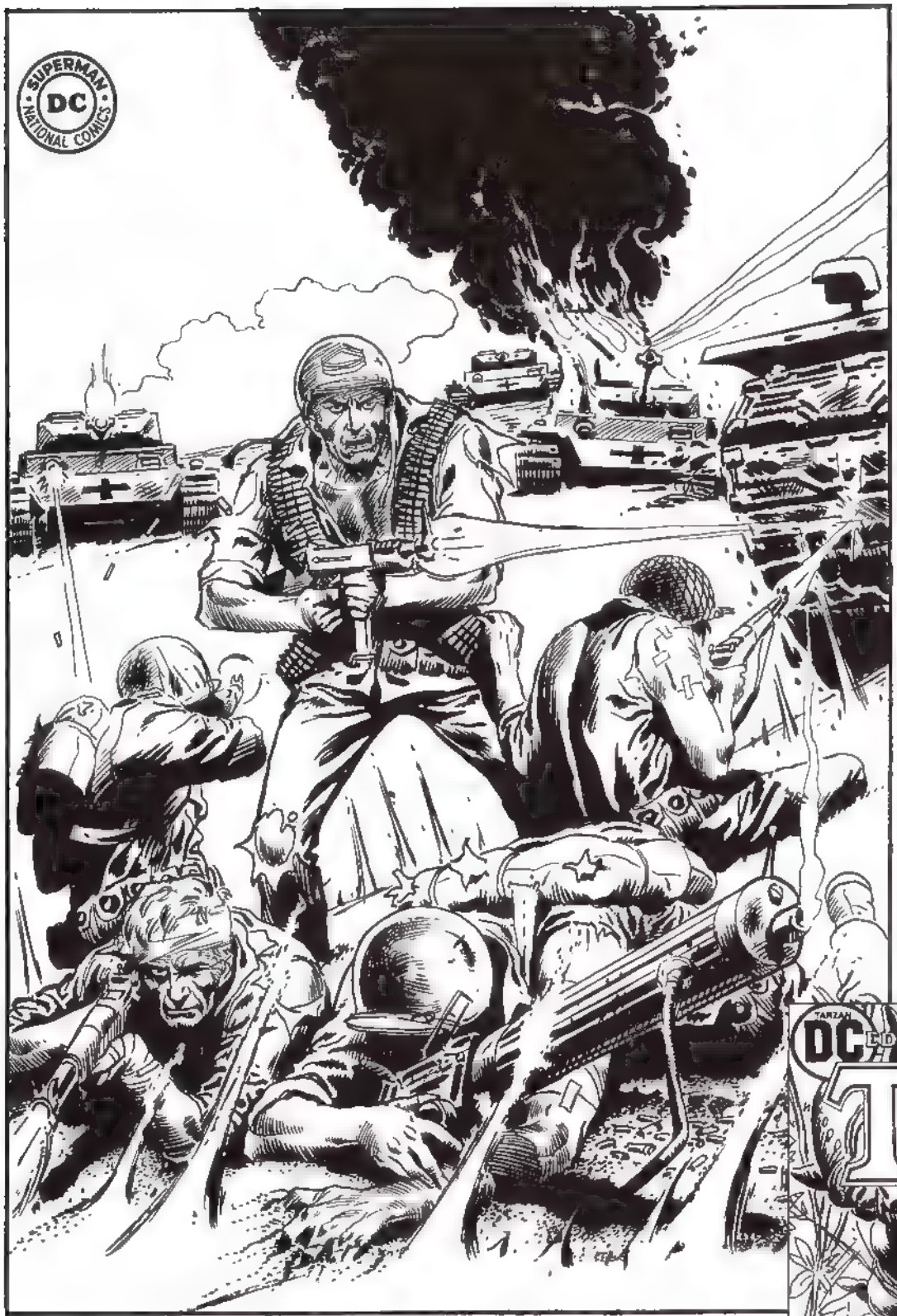
GLIDING TOWARD A FASHIONABLE SUBURB OF MIDWAY CITY, THEY DROP TO A LANDING ON A LARGE LAWN ...
SAWYER A, DO YOU REMEMBER HOW PEOPLE ON EARTH GAIN ENTRANCE TO A DWELLING?
THEY PRESS A DOORBELL LIKE THIS...
RING
EMMETT

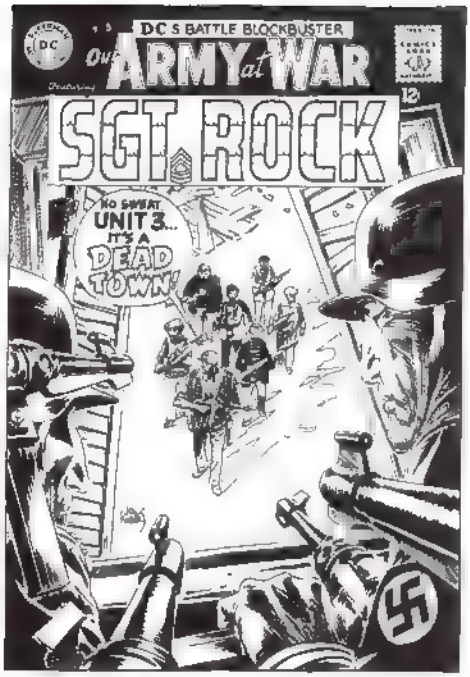
Below: *Joe Kubert remains one of two artists (the other was Carmine Infantino) who had their own issues of* DC Special *back in the late 1960s— and both of them richly deserved the honor! Thanks to Al Dellinges. [©2001 DC Comics.]*





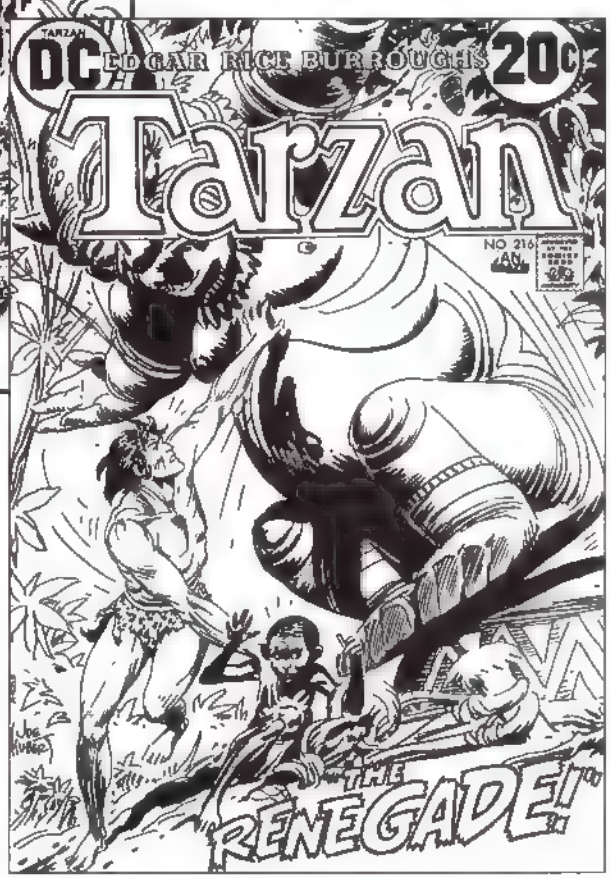






Above and left: *Joe's main World War II connection is "Sgt. Rock of Easy Company," seen here via photocopies of the original art (sources unknown) of two Kubert covers from the late-'60s era of* Our Army at War. *[©2001 DC Comics.]*

Below: *One of the many highlights of Joe's career is the* Tarzan *series he wrote and drew for DC from 1972-75, and continued to lay out for other artists (behind Kubert covers) through '76-77. Matter of fact, it could be said that one of the highlights of* Tarzan's *career is that same series of comics! And if somebody doesn't publish that entire run one of these fine days in hardcover, it'll be, er... dum-dum! [©2001 Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. Cover of* Tarzan *#216 (Jan. 1973), repro'd from photostats of the original art.]*



Besides continuing to train future generations of comics creators at The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art in Dover, New Jersey, and the recent offering of Joe Kubert's World of Cartooning: Correspondence Course for Comics Books, *the artist won an Eisner Award for his 1998 graphic novel* Fax from Sarajevo. *After nearly sixty years in the field, Joe remains at the top of his form at the beginning of a new millennium...!*

Fin

The Fox and the Fans

LETTERS TO GARDNER F. FOX FROM FUTURE PROS — 1959-1965

by Michael T. Gilbert

Michael T. Gilbert *has been a cartoonist for 25 years, and a comics fan for forty. He has written and illustrated such characters as Batman, Superman, The Spectre, Elric, Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, and others for a variety of publishers. His most famous character remains his creature-killing super-hero, Mr. Monster.*

In addition to being a major comics creator for several key decades, ***Gardner Fox*** *(1911-1986) was one of the "patron saints" both of* Alter Ego *and of early comics fandom; so we were delighted when Michael volunteered to prepare this article for the first edition of* A/E, *Vol. II.*

Like myself, thousands of comics fans in the 1950s thrilled to Gardner Fox's stories without ever knowing his name. Nonetheless, Fox's impossibly plot-heavy stories succeeded in entertaining millions of kids over a span of five decades.

Equally important, Gardner inspired a whole generation of young comics writers and artists who came of age in the 1960s.

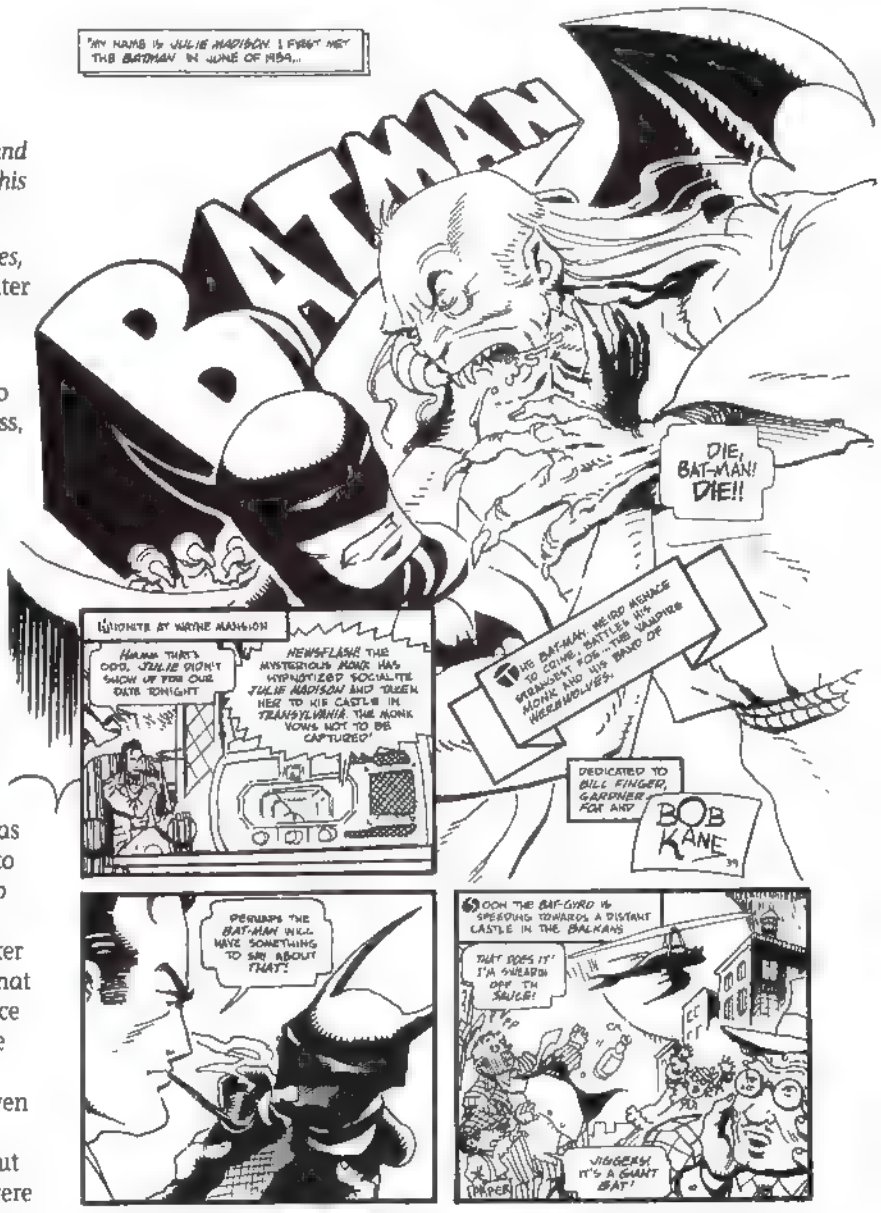
Gardner F. Fox in retirement, in front of bookshelves filled with the perhaps 140 books he wrote in addition to his comics work. [Photo courtesy of his daughter, Lynda Fox Cohen.]

As a ten-year-old in 1961, I didn't pay much attention to writers' credits. First, they were rarely given —particularly at DC, where Gardner Fox did much of his comics work. Besides, I was too young to care. I wanted to know if Hawkman could stop the Shadow Thief of Midway City before his Dimensio-meter froze the world, or whether that giant starfish from outer space would mop the floor with the Justice League!

At that age, I doubt it even occurred to me that these adventures weren't created out of thin air. True, the artists were sometimes allowed to sign their work, but writers' credits were few and far between.

That changed at DC in 1961, when editor Julius Schwartz decided to share biographical information about Hawkman's creative team with their readers. In the letters section of *The Brave and the Bold* #35, writer Gardner Fox and cartoonist Joe Kubert were the subject of brief biographical sketches. For thousands of comics fans, this was our first small glimpse into the secret "behind the scenes" world that few of us suspected. This letters section and future ones also included full addresses of the fans, allowing the readers to contact each other and form fan friendships. On rare occasions, the DC editors would even forward fan mail to the writers and artists.

Back then this was unusual, in sharp contrast to today's comics field. Until the 1960s (with rare exceptions), writers and artists were simply craftsmen doing a job—not superstars to be worshiped. There was no *Comics Journal*, no *Wizard*, no *Comics Buyer's Guide* breathlessly reporting every new project from hundreds of creators


"MY NAME IS JULIE MADISON. I FIRST MET THE BATMAN IN JUNE OF 1959..."
BATMAN
DIE, BAT-MAN! DIE!!
DEDICATED TO BILL FINGER, GARDNER FOX AND
BOB KANE
MEANWHILE AT WAYNE MANSION
HMMM THAT'S ODD. JULIE DIDN'T SHOW UP FOR OUR DATE TONIGHT
NEWSFLASH! THE MYSTERIOUS MONK HAS HYPNOTIZED SOCIALITE JULIE MADISON AND TAKEN HER TO HIS CASTLE IN TRANSYLVANIA. THE MONK VOWS NOT TO BE CAPTURED!
PERHAPS THE BAT-MAN WILL HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT THAT!
SOON THE BAT-GYRO IS SPEEDING TOWARDS A DISTANT CASTLE IN THE BALKANS
THAT DOES IT! I'M SWEARIN' OFF TH' SAUCE!
JIGGERS! IT'S A GIANT BAT!
PAPER

Michael T. Gilbert's artistic homage to Batman as written by Fox, the second person (after Bill Finger) ever to script the Dark Knight's adventures. [Reproduced from original art for Legends of the Dark Knight *#94, 1997.]*

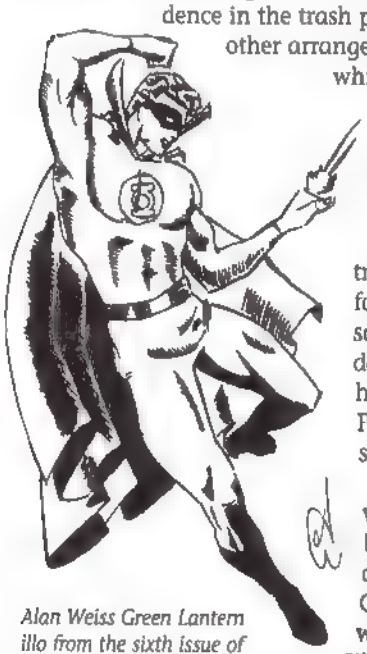
in excruciating detail. Today, much of the mystery in the comics field is gone, a victim of media overkill. Not then!

As a comics professional in the 1990s, I wondered what the relationship between readers and creators was like in the '40s and '50s. A few years ago, I got a chance to glimpse into that world, courtesy of Gardner Fox. Let's backtrack a bit first:

In 1967, Gardner Fox's literary agent, August Lenniger, suggested that Fox donate his notes, correspondence, and samples of his work to the University of Oregon (at Eugene) as a tax write-off.

In a letter dated May 2, 1967, Lenniger wrote to Fox, stating that he was enclosing "two letters which were prepared for me by the University of Oregon, with whom we are arranging to

contribute our correspondence files on an annual basis. Would like your permission to include your files; however, if you have any objection to our doing so, we will instead lose obsolete correspondence in the trash pile. And if you do not have any other arrangements, it might be well worth your while considering contributions of your old manuscripts to U. of O.—you might be able to get yourself a fairly nice contributions credit for tax relief."



Alan Weiss Green Lantern illo from the sixth issue of Mike Vosburg's fanzine Masquerader *(Spring 1964).*

Fortunately, Fox chose not to trash his old work. He donated over fourteen boxes of books, comics, scripts, plot ideas, and fan letters dating back to the 1940s. When I had the opportunity to explore the Fox collection a few years ago, I was struck by two things.

First, what an incredibly prolific writer Gardner Fox was. Starting at DC in 1937, Fox eventually co-created the Justice Society and the Golden Age Flash and Hawkman, as well as the Justice League and the Silver Age Hawkman and Atom. In his five-decade career, he also scripted thousands of pages of stories featuring Zatara, Batman, Vigilante, Shining Knight, and the Spectre... and later Adam Strange, Space Ranger, Johnny Thunder, and dozens of other timeless characters in a variety of genres. He also did work for EC and other publishers, including Frazetta's magnum opus *Thun'da* #1 for Magazine Enterprises.

In addition to comics, Fox produced over one hundred novels, running the gamut from historical novels and sword-and-sorcery to Science-fiction, crime, and westerns. He even threw in a few soft-core sex novels for good measure! Did this guy ever sleep?

The second thing that struck me as I skimmed through his correspondence was the number of current comics writers and artists who wrote to him as kids or teenagers. Though no carbon copies of his replies to their letters were included in his papers, it's clear that he appreciated their letters and encouraged his young fans. While space limitations preclude extensive reprinting of these letters (Roy Thomas' letters alone run to sixty pages!), we thought you might enjoy a small sampling. Punctuation and, for the most part, spelling have been left as in the original letters. See how many names you recognize!

For many, including myself, **Jerry Bails** is one of the true fathers of comics fandom. His ongoing project *The Who's Who of American Comic Books*—dedicated to providing biographical information on every American comic book creator—remains one of the most impressive and valuable reference works in the comics field. It's interesting to note that Bails was already deep into his project as early as 1959, as this letter of 1/27/59 indicates. By the way, Bails eventually did get Fox's bound volumes of Golden Age *All-Star Comics*, to his great delight!

Dear Mr. Fox,

Please remember that my offer for your two volumes of All-Stars is always good. I'm trying my best to be patient, but completing my boyhood dream often gets the best of me. Your letter of last August set me off like a Sputnik. Another letter from you always serves to brighten my spirits.

I'd like to know so many things that only you could tell me. I wonder if I sent you a list of questions that you could answer with brief remarks, would you find the time, or would it just bother you? It would be a priceless addition to my records, especially if you didn't care to part with your collection.

I'm a sort of writer myself these days. I am at present engaged in writing my doctoral dissertation on the theory of scientific languages. I'm afraid the audience for which I'm writing is pretty small though.

I might be wrong, but I have always suspected that you were well-read, in science and history particularly, and that we would have a lot in common. Could I be right?

If you can ever find time to tell me about yourself, know that I will always be interested.

Your friend and lifetime fan,
Jerry Bails
1412 W. 39th St.
Kansas City, Mo.

Back in the early '60s it was not uncommon for DC to send the fans original scripts and artwork as prizes just for writing in. The following letter was sent by Jerry Bails on 11/14/60, just after the young University of Kansas City associate professor had received the original art for an entire issue (!) of *Justice League of America*:

Dear Gardner,

Thanks for the JLA script. When I was a youngster I would have given up my most prized possessions (except my All-Stars, of course) to have had just a peek at a script or the original drawings of the JSA. Once when I was with my family in New York on a vacation, I showed up at 480 Lexington Avenue in the hope that I would be able to go through the DC offices. Unfortunately, because I couldn't tell the girl at the front desk that I was from a local art school, I didn't get to realize my wish. Now, thanks to you, I am not only enjoying the revival of my old favorites, but I'm getting the extra kick that comes only to those who can stand behind the curtain and watch their favorite puppet master. ..

Best wishes,
Jerry

In February of 1961, Bails made another trip to New York, and his meetings there with Gardner Fox and Julie Schwartz paved the way for the birth of *Alter Ego* and for the growth of organized comics fandom. His thank-you letter to Gardner and Julie, written just after he decided on a name for his new fanzine, was printed in the Hamster Press *A/E* collection.

No date on this **Marv Wolfman** letter to DC which was forwarded to Fox, but presumably around 1961 or so. Shortly after, Wolfman began publishing his own stories in fanzines. In 1968 he began scripting professionally for DC, writing many award-winning stories featuring characters Fox had created.

Dear Editor;

In one of your D.C. comics you (or should I say Gardner Fox) said that he also has stories published in regular books.

I am very anxious to read these but he said so some of these are under other names. Could you please publish a list of his books, publishers and name he used for the benifit of readers who would like to read them.

While I am writing I would like to say how much I enjoyed the latest issue of the Atom. Keep it up.

Marvin Wolfman
142-18 59th Ave.
Flushing 55,N.Y.

After contributing to *Star-Studded Comics* and other 1960s fanzines, in 1972 cartoonist **Alan Weiss** of Las Vegas, Nevada began drawing comics for both DC and Marvel. His strips for other publishers include "Steelgrip Sharkey" for Epic and "War Dancer" for Defiant. By the way, DC did eventually take Alan's advice in this 1/5/61 letter—reviving both Plastic Man and Captain Marvel some years later.

Dear Mr. Fox:

I recently read your article in the latest issue of Hawkman Comics and I enjoyed it very much. Naturally I was not born at the time you created the Hawkman for Flash Comics but, my uncle remembers him and was surprised to read that he has been revived again. I am sure he will again enjoy reading your Hawkman Comics.

He also told me about other characters such as Capt. Marvel, Plastic Man, Sub-mariner, The Green Hornet and Wonderboy. I have five comics of Plastic Man dated around 1955 also one copy of Capt. Marvel dated 1953. I enjoy reading these comics very much.

I thought perhaps you might be acquainted with the writers and artists of these characters. I know that I would enjoy reading these comics again as well as the other kids my age. I know some of your older fans would enjoy reading them too. I am sure that it would be a credit to National Comics to try and revive these heroes once again.

Thank you for finding time to read my letter and Good Luck with your New Adventures of Hawkman.

Sincerely,
Alan Weiss

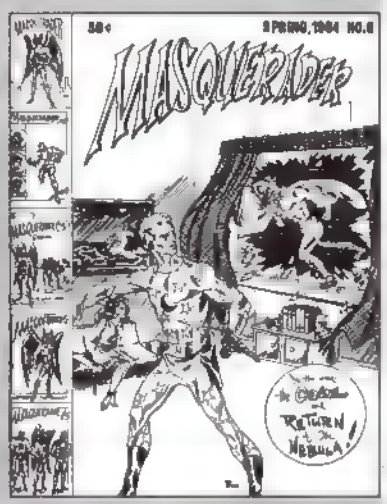
Mike Vosburg began publishing his fanzine *The Masquerader* in 1962. The Cowl was a strip drawn by fan-artist Ronn Foss that appeared therein. In 1973 Vosburg became a professional cartoonist, drawing comics for many publishers. In addition to his comics work, he's responsible for drawing the imitation EC comics covers for the *Tales from the Crypt* TV show!

9/28/62

Dear Mr. Fox,

I was very pleased to hear from you last week. It gave me an idea of what the pros think of Mask. Stan Lee also complimented the work the contributors did. Besides, it gives you more spirit to work with when your work is thought well of by the people who really do do the best work in the field.

I received various comments on the Cowl. Foss really flipped over it as did many of the fans. Others were a little bit worried—using a fugitive for a hero. (Boy, would the Komix Kode jump me!) However, Jim Spade's stand is a good one—he doesn't have to pay for a crime he actually never committed.



Ronn Foss' cover for Masquerader *#6 (Spring 1964) featured Hawkman and Mike Vosburg's original hero, The Cowl, both mentioned in MV's '62 letter to Fox.*

Hawkman is by far the best thing that National has published since the Forties. Best thing anybody has published since the forties. Having read over some of the stories you did for the Hawks—and the one for Flash #123, I realized just how good the stories were. One of the best stories I ever read was "the Flash of Two Worlds." Nine-tenths of the Hawkman stories to date have surpassed it. Just pointing out what a terrific character he is. I'll be heartbroken if this character isn't accepted. Among most of the comics fans one thing is unanimous—Hawkman is the greatest!

Sincerely
Mike Vosburg

This letter from Edgar Rice Burroughs fan **Robert Barrett** is noteworthy for his comments on the working relationship between writer Fox and artist Frank Frazetta on their classic jungle comic, *Thun'da* #1.

Dear Mr. Fox:

Sorry to bother you again so soon, but I was talking to Frank Frazetta over the phone last Saturday and it has raised some more questions which I would like to clear up before I begin the THUN'DA article.

Frazetta told me that the basic idea for the first THUN'DA story, "King of the Lost Lands," was his idea. The way I got it from him was that he had sketched out roughly the story as he visualized it—as he put it, "I had the plane crash lasting for a full page rather than a few panels, with it hitting, skidding, then bounding and skidding some more before coming to a halt." He said that he had talked the idea over with Ray Krank who liked the idea but wanted to shorten the story down to make room for some more stories in the same issue. What I would like to know was, were you aware that the basic idea was Frazetta's or did Ray

THUN'DA
DEEP IN THE MIST AND FOG OF AFRICA IS A LOST LAND, A LAND REPORTED BY AVIATORS —BUT A COUNTRY UNTOUCHED BY CIVILIZATION, WHERE STRENGTH IS KING, AND THE WEAK DIE OR ARE CONQUERED! STRANGER TALES HAVE BEEN TOLD OF MASTODONIC MONSTERS THAT ROAM THIS MISTY WORLD, STORIES OF ARMORED GIANTS THAT BATTLE TO THE DEATH IN SWAMPY WATERS AND WHO ROCK THE EARTH ITSELF WITH THE FURY OF THEIR COMBAT! YET NO TALE IS SO STRANGE AS THAT WHICH CONCERNS HIM WHO STROKED THE ANCIENT DRUM OF KOLLA THE CRUEL, WHO ROSE BY WIT AND MUSCLE TO THE ALTAR OF HAPAN, THE MAN OF THE OUTER WORLD WHO BECAME —
"KING OF THE LOST LANDS"
THIS TALE BEGAN SOME YEARS AGO, WHEN THE SANDS OF THE SAHARA RAN RED WITH THE BLOOD OF ROMMEL'S AFRIKA KORPS, WHEN ALLIED AIRPLANES ROARED OVER THE GORILLA-INFESTED JUNGLES, CARRYING FOOD AND SUPPLIES TO EISENHOWER AND MONTGOMERY
TWISTING AND TURNING HELPLESSLY THE BIG SHIP HURTLES EARTHWARD, TOWARD THE UNKNOWN

The fateful plane crash, as published, from the splash page of Thun'da #1 by Frank Frazetta (and Gardner Fox).

Krank simply fill you in roughly on the basic lead story ("King of the Lost Lands") and then you took it from there, writing this first story from Frazetta's idea and then creating the rest of the stories on your own? Frazetta also said that it was his intention of having all the THUN'DA adventures taking place in the "Lost Lands" but that Ray Krank wanted to get him into the world of "modern" (?) Africa.

I feel it is important that this be clarified, if possible, before getting to far in the article—because I wish to be fair to both you and Mr. Frazetta and I'm sure that each of you will receive a copy of this article. I notice in your letter that you said the idea was suggested to you by Krank and I know that you might not be aware that the idea was given to Krank by Frazetta.

Sincerely,
Bob

Years before he became a professional Science-fiction writer, **Richard Lupoff** was the editor of *Xero*, considered by many to be the forerunner of the modern comics fanzine. The articles mentioned in this letter of January 16, 1961, were later collected into the popular book *All in Color for a Dime* (edited by Lupoff and Don Thompson). Fox's notes at the bottom of the letter indicate that he sent copies of *Xero* to Julius Schwartz, suggesting it be mentioned in the *JLA* letter column. Clearly Fox was part of the fan scene from the very start, encouraging the growth of current comics fandom. He in turn won many fan awards in the early '60s.

Dear Mr. Fox,

You may or may not be familiar with a peculiar brand of *very* small magazines called "fanzines." They are amateur publications, generally mimeographed, published solely for fun and distributed among an extremely limited circle of readers.

Such a magazine, XERO, has been running a series of articles about old (and new) comic books. The two most recent in the series have dealt with the National comics group in general and the Justice Society/League in particular.

You have doubtless already noted the enclosed material—tear sheets of one of these articles and the complete issue containing the other.

If you would like to comment on the material enclosed—or on the general topic discussed—I'd be most pleased to have your remarks in a succeeding issue.

Sincerely,
Richard A. Lupoff

E. Nelson Bridwell was a writer for *Mad* magazine from 1957 to 1971. As a scripter and editor for DC (from 1964 until his death in 1987), he was known for his encyclopedic knowledge of the characters and minutia of the DC universe. This undated letter was written sometime prior to the first JLA-JSA team-up, in 1963.

Dear Editors:

When I was a schoolboy, I was quite an avid fan of your magazines; hence, I have been interested in seeing the return of some of the "friends of my youth, the companions of earlier days" (to quote Micawber). Of course, it seemed strange to see a Flash who is not Jay Garrick, and another Green Lantern than Alan Scott; but it was a pleasure to see Carter Hall back in action.

I was happy to see that Doctor Fate is being considered for a comeback; he was one of the better heroes of that era. Other fine possibilities from the old J.S.A. ranks are Starman, the Atom, Dr. Mid-Nite, the Spectre, and Sandman. I'm not so sure about Wildcat; while Hourman, Mr. Terrific, and Black Canary have little to offer. Other old DC features which might have promise are Robotman, the Shining Knight, Vigilante, and the Ghost Patrol.

My own favorite will probably have no chance, since a Western hero has usurped his name. He's that court jester of the J.S.A., Johnny Thunder. I cherish fond memories of the bumbling Johnny, the Thunderbolt, Daisy Darling, and especially Peachy Pet. Perhaps if you changed his name...?

I got rid of most of my comics years ago (with some notable exceptions, such as the Real Facts and two All-Flashes—the ones containing "Muscleman, the Djinn and the Flash" and the special April Fool story), but so vivid are they in my memory that I can still recall all the rhymed clues in the J.S.A.'s Hector Bauer case...

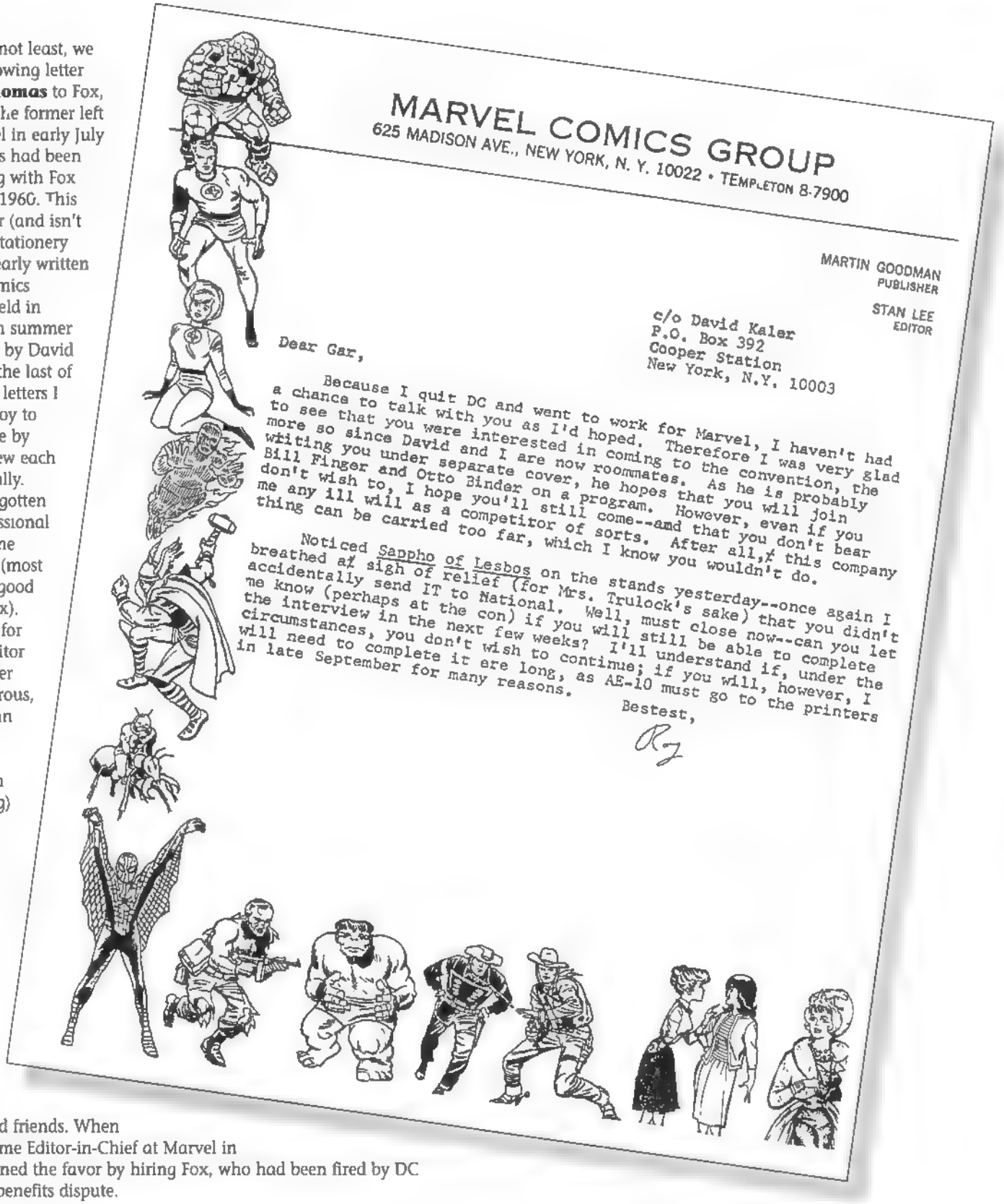
Having delivered myself of these thoughts, I would now like to ask about the possibilities in offering some features of my own. Recently I dug into the scores of characters I created as a youth; how exciting they had seemed then, how poor now. And yet a few—a very few—had in them the bases for building good comic features. So I'd like to ask if you'd be in the market for some sample scripts. I may add that I am a professional writer.

I would appreciate an answer to this query soon. Thank you.

E. Nelson Bridwell
1013 N. Quapah
Oklahoma City 7, Okla.

Last but not least, we have the following letter from **Roy Thomas** to Fox, shortly after the former left DC for Marvel in early July 1965. Thomas had been corresponding with Fox since Nov. 3, 1960. This undated letter (and isn't that Marvel stationery cool?) was clearly written before the comics convention held in Manhattan in summer of '65, hosted by David Kaler; it was the last of the dozens of letters I found from Roy to Gardner, since by then they knew each other personally. Thomas had gotten his first professional job at DC some weeks earlier (most likely with a good word from Fox).

Working for Superman editor Mort Weisinger proved disastrous, and when Stan Lee (with whom Roy had also been corresponding) offered him a writing job, Thomas quit DC and moved to Marvel. Thomas was worried that his mentor Fox might be angry with him. Fox wasn't, and they remained friends. When Thomas became Editor-in-Chief at Marvel in 1972 he returned the favor by hiring Fox, who had been fired by DC in 1968 in a benefits dispute.



MARVEL COMICS GROUP
625 MADISON AVE., NEW YORK, N. Y. 10022 • TEMPLETON 8-7900

MARTIN GOODMAN
PUBLISHER

STAN LEE
EDITOR

c/o David Kaler
P.O. Box 392
Cooper Station
New York, N.Y. 10003

Dear Gar,

Because I quit DC and went to work for Marvel, I haven't had a chance to talk with you as I'd hoped. Therefore I was very glad to see that you were interested in coming to the convention, the more so since David and I are now roommates. As he is probably writing you under separate cover, he hopes that you will join Bill Finger and Otto Binder on a program. However, even if you don't wish to, I hope you'll still come--amd that you don't bear me any ill will as a competiror of sorts. After all, this company thing can be carried too far, which I know you wouldn't do.

Noticed Sappho of Lesbos on the stands yesterday--once again I breathed a sigh of relief (for Mrs. Trulock's sake) that you didn't accidentally send IT to National. Well, must close now--can you let me know (perhaps at the con) if you will still be able to complete the interview in the next few weeks? I'll understand if, under the circumstances, you don't wish to continue; if you will, however, I will need to complete it ere long, as AE-10 must go to the printers in late September for many reasons.

Bestest,

Roy

Incidentally, the "Mrs. Trulock" referred to above was Mrs. Guy Percy Trulock, then administratrix of the Comics Code Authority, and *Sappho of Lesbos* was one of Fox's little-known soft-core sex books. (And thank goodness the 10-year-old Michael T. Gilbert never saw it. It might have scarred him for life!)

On behalf of the Gardner Fox archives at the University of Oregon Library, Michael Gilbert is looking for any of Fox's letters that still exist, especially those related to his writing career. Copies—not necessarily the originals—may be sent to the Alter Ego *address listed earlier, and they will be forwarded to Michael.*

It Was Thirty Years Ago Today...

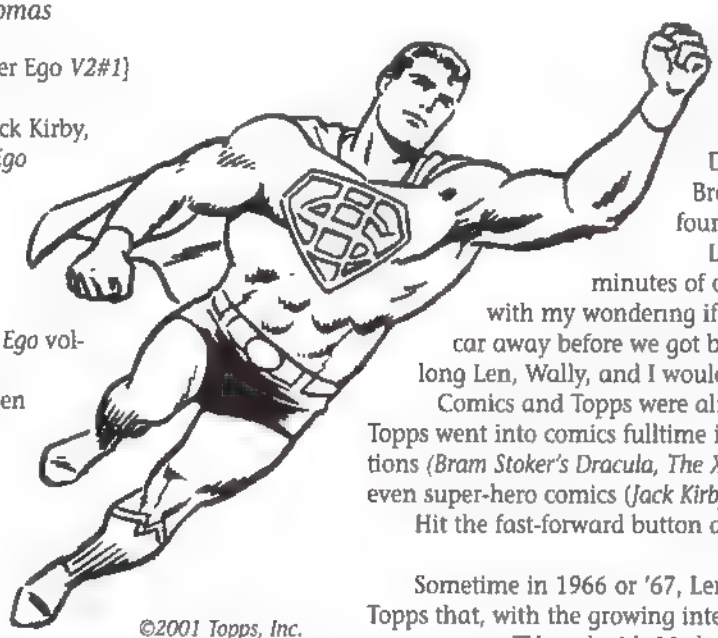
THE RARELY-SEEN TOPPS SUPER-HERO PARODIES

by Roy Thomas

[*Abridged from* Alter Ego *V2#1*]

Besides artwork by Joe Kubert, Jack Kirby, Marie Severin, and Bill Everett, *Alter Ego* #10 (1969) was proud to feature two super-hero parodies ("Blunder Woman" and "Sub-Marine Man") illustrated by the late great Wally Wood. Both takeoffs were later included in Hamster Press' 1997 *Alter Ego* volume.

That pair of parodies, plus fourteen more, were produced in 1966-67 by Topps, the company that had given the world Bazooka Bubble Gum and zillions of sports cards. The stories in those sixteen $2^1/2"$ x $3^1/2"$ mini-comics were written by Len Brown and yours truly, with covers conceived by Len and Art Spiegelman—yes, the same writer/artist who years later would win a Pulitzer Price for his powerful graphic novel *Maus*.



©2001 Topps, Inc.

Here's how it happened:

The first guy I met in New York City after moving there in late June 1965—the first who was not a full-time comics pro, that is—was Len Brown.

At 23 a year younger than I was, Len had begun working for Topps right out of high school. In 1965 he was assistant director of product development under Woody Gelman, who had written and drawn *Nutsy Squirrel* and other humor comics for National/DC in the 1940s—and who, as a sideline, published the first hardcover collections of EC horror comics, *Prince Valiant, Flash Gordon, et al.*, under his Nostalgia Press imprint.

Len and I had had only brief contact, via mail, before I moved east. In summer of 1964 he had tried to purchase a number of Golden Age comics I was selling through a fanzine ad, with my long-suffering mother handling orders while I was off on a month-long drive through Mexico. Alas, in a vain attempt to keep prices down in the burgeoning old-comics market, I had priced my comics far too low; for, by the time Len phoned Jackson, Missouri, early mega-dealer Howard Rogofsky had already snapped up virtually everything. The free market at work.

Fast forward one year:

Len picked me up at the Manhattan hotel where I was temporarily ensconced (since he lived in Brooklyn, he owned a car), and we two new buddies went off for a night on the town. Len soon double-parked on a side street and escorted me up the stairs of a brownstone to meet—none other than Wally Wood.

Wally, aided by assistants such as Dan Adkins, was finishing up the second issue of *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* for the soon-to-debut Tower Comics company. Len had scripted the first two "Dynamo" stories; Wally, in turn, had given Dynamo the secret identity of "Len Brown," thus assuring Len a sort of four-color immortality.

Little did I dream, during those few minutes of chitchat with Wood, Adkins, *et al.*—with my wondering if New York's Finest would tow Len's car away before we got back downstairs—that before too long Len, Wally, and I would join forces on a project for Topps.

Comics and Topps were already an "item" decades before Topps went into comics fulltime in 1992 with movie and TV adaptations *(Bram Stoker's Dracula, The X-Files, Xena: Warrior Princess)* and even super-hero comics (*Jack Kirby's Secret City Saga*, etc.).

Hit the fast-forward button again.

Sometime in 1966 or '67, Len and Woody Gelman convinced Topps that, with the growing interest in comics—with *Batman* a phenomenon on TV, and with *Mad* still riding high on the magazine racks—the company should put out parodies of comic book and comic strip heroes: six single-panel pages of story, plus front and back covers. Len and his longtime friend Art Spiegelman dreamed up the front covers; Art wrote and drew ad takeoffs for the back covers. Len named the heroes and wrote the first few scripts to get things moving, then asked me to write the rest. At this late date, neither he nor I am certain which of us wrote certain of the parodies, so one or two of the credits that follow actually represent only a best guess.

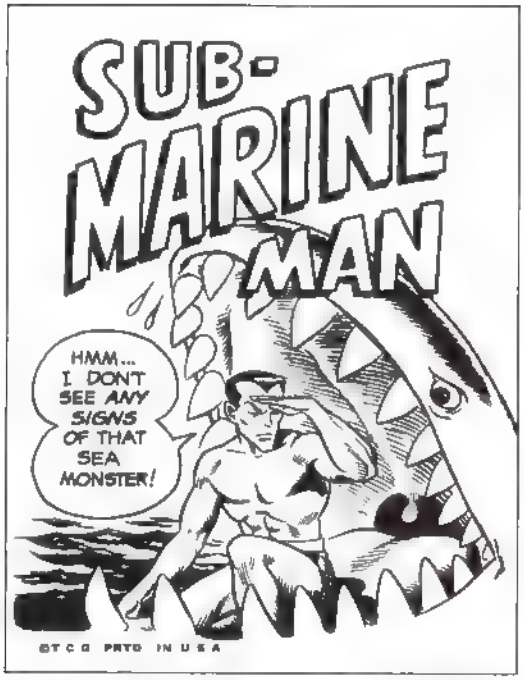
Wally Wood, who had drawn the unequaled "Superduperman" and "Batboy and Rubin" strips for Harvey Kurtzman's early *Mad*, illustrated roughly the first half of the sixteen mini-comics. The rest were ably penciled by *Green Lantern* and *Atom* artist Gil Kane, with Wally inking.

I was happy at the time that there were no credits on the parodies, since I wasn't sure how Stan Lee would react to moonlighting by one of his staff. (After all, it was in late '66 that DC started its own super-hero spoof, *The Inferior Five;* and in mid-'67 Marvel launched *Brand Echh*—a title soon changed, for reasons that have always eluded me, to *Not Brand Echh.*)

Topps' mini-comics were printed in color, and were test-marketed in a few select areas. Alas, sell-through was reasonably good in places where comics were sold, and not so good elsewhere. So Topps shelved the project, and those mini-comics are today a rare collector's item....

[**2001 NOTE:** *On the immediately following pages are reproduced seven of the sixteen mini-comics. The other nine are reprinted later in this book, in conjunction with* A/E *V2#2-3.*]

Rediscovered Treasures

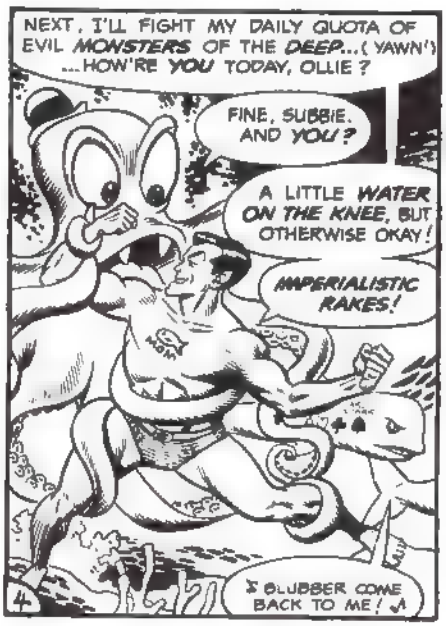


GROW YOUR OWN
VENUS FLY TRAP
Now you can get your very own Venus Fly Trap! Feed it insects, pieces of meat, pastrami sandwiches and math teachers.
available from
GRIZZLY GARDENS; Burp, Mich.

Cover concept:
Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script, pp. 2-7: Roy Thomas
Art: Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman

IN THE SUNKEN CONTINENT OF FATLANDIS, THE REGAL SUBMARINEMAN SURVEYS HIS WATERY KINGDOM...
IMPERVIOUS WRECKS!
I PRINCE NAME-IT, MONARCH OF ALL I SURVEY, AM READY FOR ANOTHER DAY OF SUPER-DOING! (YAWN)
YES, MY PRINCE!
IT'S TIME TO PLAY-- "NAME THAT TUNA!"
HOLY MACKEREL!
2

CURSES! FOILED AGAIN!
FIRST I MUST HALT THE DAILY ATTEMPT BY WARLORD KLANG TO TAKE OVER MY THRONE! (HO-HUM!)
IMPUNIOUS REEKS!
♪ GONNA LIVE TILL I FRY! ♪
3

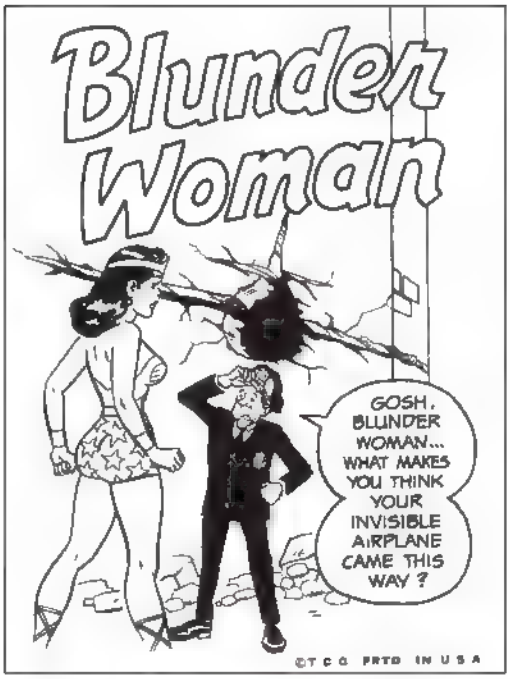

NEXT, I'LL FIGHT MY DAILY QUOTA OF EVIL MONSTERS OF THE DEEP... (YAWN) ...HOW'RE YOU TODAY, OLLIE?
FINE, SUBBIE. AND YOU?
A LITTLE WATER ON THE KNEE, BUT OTHERWISE OKAY!
IMPERIALISTIC RAKES!
♪ BLUBBER COME BACK TO ME! ♪
4

IMPETUOUS RICH! YES... (DOUBLE YAWN)... I, PRINCE NAME-IT, THE SUBMARINEMAN, AM TRULY MONARCH OF ALL I SURVEY!
...INCLUDING THIS FISH HOOK!!
...FISH HOOK?
SHAD ROW
SKID ROW
♪ TAKE THE ♪ LAST TRAIN TO SHARKSVILLE! ♪
5

HOLY HALIBUT! THE PRINCE HAS BEEN CAPTURED... NO DOUBT BY FIENDS FROM THE SURFACE WORLD!
HELP!
IMPERATIVE RES-CUE!
♪ FOAM ♪ ON THE ♪ RANGE.
OH WELL... I ALWAYS LIKED WARLARD KLANG BETTER ANYHOW!
6

SOME TIME LATER, IN THE MEGALOPOLIS AQUARIUM, A NEW EXHIBIT IS UNVEILED!...
HERE IS OUR LATEST SPECIMEN... INFERIUS WRETCH!!
CURIOUSLY, THIS FISH LOOKS ALMOST HUMAN! IN FACT, OCCASIONALLY IT MAKES NOISES THAT SOUND AS IF IT'S SAYING, "I'M MONARCH OF ALL I SURVEY!"
BOOK
7

Cover concept.
Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script, pp. 2-7: Roy Thomas
Art: Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman



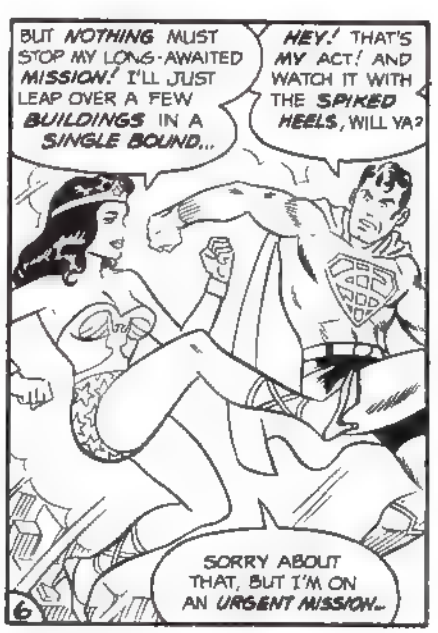
COLLECT STAMPS, COINS AND FOREIGN MONEY
Yes—we collect stamps, coins, foreign money, dollar bills, checks, savings bonds, etc. Send us all you have. MONEY BACK GUARANTEE — if we aren't thoroughly delighted with your money we promise to send it back.

LIEUT INEEDA RINSE, AS USUAL, IS CHASING COL. STEVE TREMOR!
STEVE, PLEASE TELL ME! I MUST KNOW! ARE YOU AVOIDING ME...?
WHY, WHATEVER MAKES YOU THINK THAT? IT'S JUST THAT I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT IN ARGENTINA!
FAIR O' D.C.E. ISLAND
2

SUDDENLY...
BY NEPTUNE'S BEACHBALL! I'M RECEIVING THE URGENT CALL I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR ALL THESE WEEKS!
K-BOING!
NOTHING MUST STOP ME FROM GOING INTO ACTION AS BLUNDER WOMAN!
THATAWAY
LOVERS LEAP 6000 FT
3

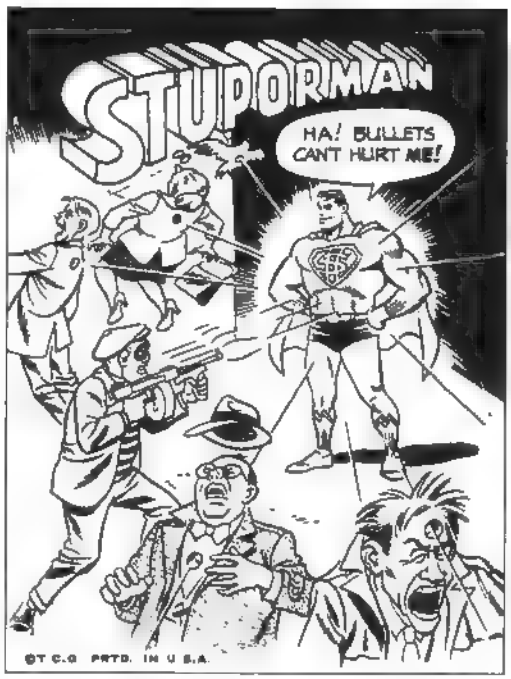
MOMENTS LATER...
WELL, HERE I GO... DRESSED AS USUAL IN THE WORLD'S MOST IMPRACTICAL CRIME-FIGHTING COSTUME!
I MEAN, DID YOU EVER TRY TO RUN WEARING HIGH HEELS AND CAST IRON BRACELETS?
OH, WELL, I'LL JUST LEAP OFF THIS CLIFF ONTO MY INVISIBLE ROBOT PLANE!
HELLO, PLANE, HONEY!
LOVER'S LEAP
4

BY MERCURY'S THERMOMETER! MY TRUSTY PLANE WASN'T THERE! SOMETIMES I WONDER WHAT I SEE IN AN INVISIBLE PLANE, ANYHOW!
LUCKY I LANDED ON MY TIARA, BOY!
5


BUT NOTHING MUST STOP MY LONG-AWAITED MISSION! I'LL JUST LEAP OVER A FEW BUILDINGS IN A SINGLE BOUND...
HEY! THAT'S MY ACT! AND WATCH IT WITH THE SPIKED HEELS, WILL YA?
SORRY ABOUT THAT, BUT I'M ON AN URGENT MISSION...
6

NAMELY, I HADDA GET HERE TO MAZY'S DEPT. STORE... 'CAUSE IT'S TIME FOR THEIR ANNUAL EVENING-GOWN SALE!
YOU DON'T THINK I WANT TO RUN AROUND IN THIS OUT-DATED SWIM-SUIT THIS WINTER, DO YOU?
DESERT BOOTS (SAND 10¢ EXTRA)
7

Cover concept:
Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script, pp. 2-7: Len Brown
Art: Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman

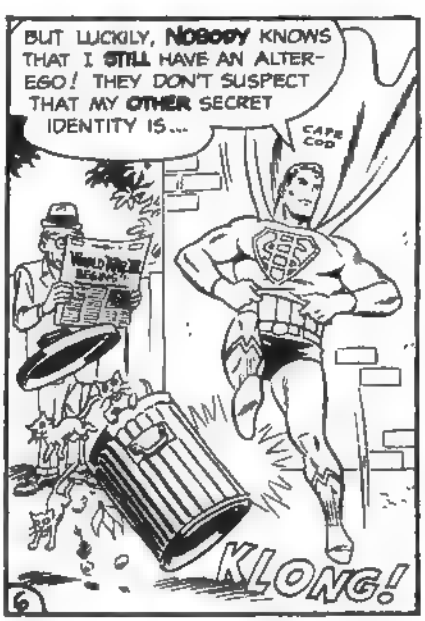


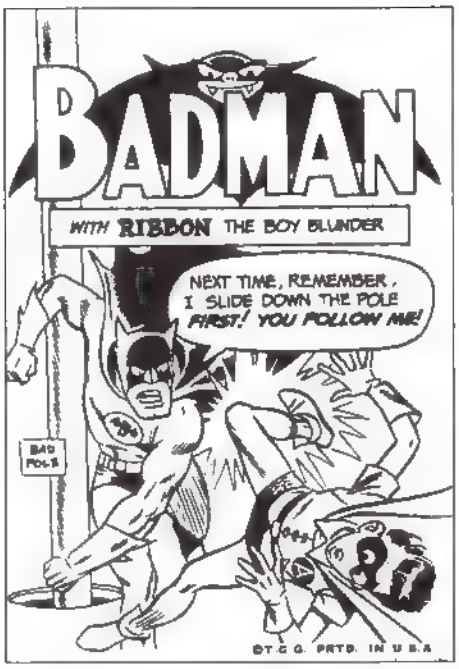
MAKE MONEY IN YOUR SPARE TIME
Why try to EARN money when it's so easy to MAKE it with our little printing presses.
Fool your family, friends, and the police. Send $500.00 (get the money from your father — we don't trust you — you sneaky rat-fink) and send to —
LOOKS REAL!
PRINTERS DEVILS, Counterfait, Tex.

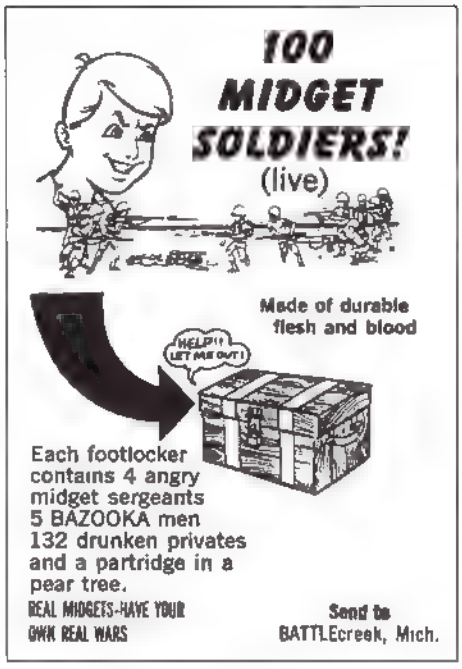
AS OUR COMIC BOOK OPENS, LOUSY LAINE IS UP TO HER USUAL DIRTY WORK.
I'VE SUSPECTED FOR YEARS THAT CLERK KANT IS REALLY STUPORMAN! WHAT I SEE PROVES IT!!!
2

THE NEXT DAY, THE DAILY PLUNGER SHOUTS SHOCKING HEADLINES!
WELL KANT, HOW DO YOU LIKE THE STORY?
WELL, I'D LIKE IT BETTER IF WE WERE ON THE GROUND FLOOR! HEIGHTS BUG ME!
DEWEY WINS
DAILY PLUNGER REPORTER IS STUPORMA
4

A DEJECTED SUPER-HERO SPENDS THE DAY BROODING...
SUNDAY FLYER!
MY DAYS OF FIGHTING CRIME ARE FINISHED...IF I CONTINUE, THE UNDERWORLD WILL ONLY TAKE REVENGE ON MY FOSTER-PARENTS IN CLUCKSVILLE!
5


BUT LUCKILY, NOBODY KNOWS THAT I STILL HAVE AN ALTER-EGO! THEY DON'T SUSPECT THAT MY OTHER SECRET IDENTITY IS...
CAPE COD
KLONG!
6




100 MIDGET SOLDIERS!
(live)
Made of durable flesh and blood
HELP!! LET ME OUT!
Each footlocker contains 4 angry midget sergeants 5 BAZOOKA men 132 drunken privates and a partridge in a pear tree.
REAL MIDGETS-HAVE YOUR OWN REAL WARS
Send to BATTLEcreek, Mich.

Cover concept:
Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script, pp. 2-7: Roy Thomas
Art: Gil Kane and Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman

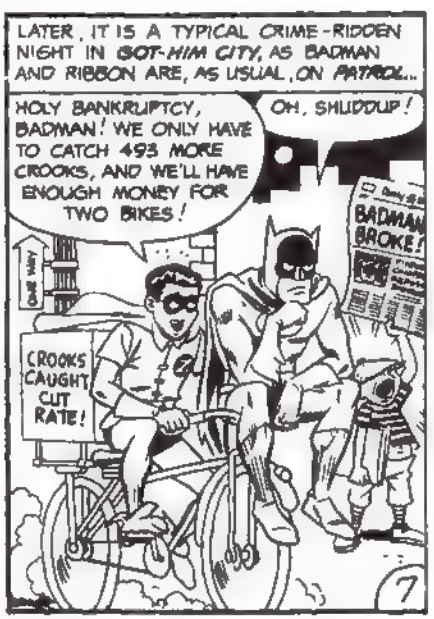
IT IS A TYPICAL CRIME-RIDDEN NIGHT IN GOT-HIM CITY, AS BADMAN AND RIBBON ARE ON PATROL IN THEIR $40,000 BADMOBILE!
HOLY DRAGSVILLE, BADMAN! WHY DOESN'T SOMETHING EXCITING HAPPEN?
DON'T WORRY, BOY BLUNDER! IT WILL! I FEEL IT IN MY BAD-BONES! LISTEN!
CALLING BADMAN! BURGLARY TAKING PLACE AT...
2

BURGLARY? DOES COMMISSIONER GORDON THINK BADMAN AND RIBBON HAVE TIME TO STOP A MERE BURGLARY?
YEAH! TO HECK WITH COMMON BURGLARS WHEN WE CAN CHASE SUCH COLORFUL CROOKS AS THE PELICAN!
FLAP
FLAP
CAW, CAW!
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
YOU CAN'T CATCH ME, DYNAMITE DUO!
3

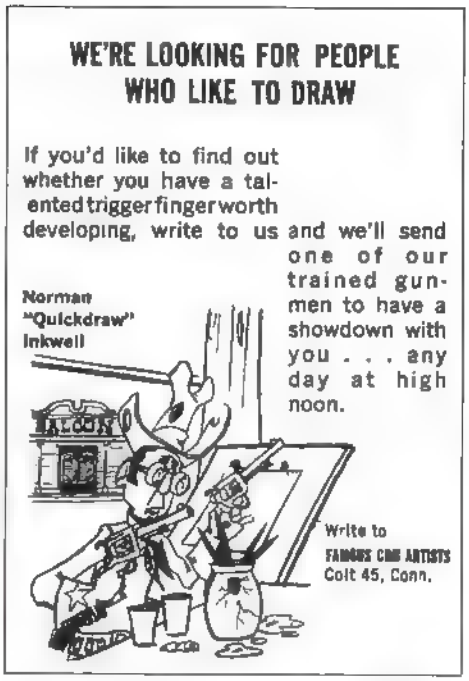
WE GOT THE PELICAN BY SPRINKLING BAD-BIRD SEED IN HIS PATH!
YES, BUT THERE GOES THE JOKESTER, OUR OTHER AVARICIOUS ANTAGONIST!
GOT $2,000 AND SOME GREEN HAIR DYE IN THAT HAUL!
CALLING BADMAN... PLEASE STOP BURGLARY AT...
OH, SHUT UP!

DON'T FRET, BADMAN! I GOT HIM WITH A PELLET FROM MY FUTILITY-BELT!
WHILE I HAVE LASSOED THE CLEVER CATTY WOMAN WHO JUST ESCAPED FROM JAIL FOR THE 95th TIME!
CURSES!
CALLING BADMAN! PRETTY PLEASE! STOP BURGLARY AT...
TO HECK WITH THAT! LET'S CALL IT A NIGHT!
5

BUT SOON, AT THE STATELY-MANNERED MANOR OF LUCE BRAIN, MILLIONAIRE PLAYBOY...
IT'S ALVIN... OUR FAITHFUL BUTLER!
SOME PETTY THUGS BROKE IN AND STOLE ALL YOUR MONEY, SIR! THE POLICE TRIED TO CALL YOU. BUT NO ONE ANSWERED! YOU'RE FLAT-BROKE, SIR!
WHAT HAPPENED, EVER-LOYAL CHUM?
6

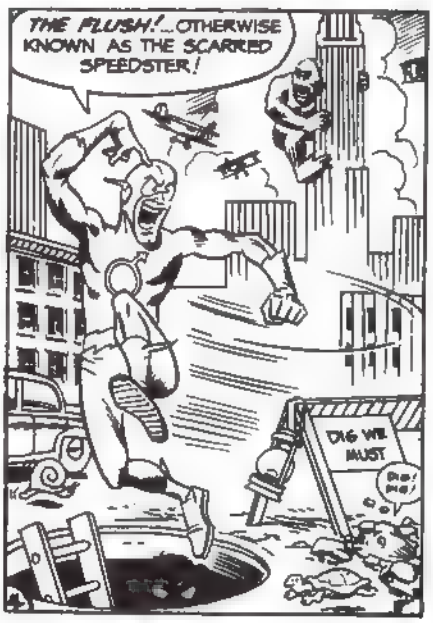

LATER, IT IS A TYPICAL CRIME-RIDDEN NIGHT IN GOT-HIM CITY, AS BADMAN AND RIBBON ARE, AS USUAL, ON PATROL...
HOLY BANKRUPTCY, BADMAN! WE ONLY HAVE TO CATCH 493 MORE CROOKS, AND WE'LL HAVE ENOUGH MONEY FOR TWO BIKES!
OH, SHUDDUP!
BADMAN BROKE!
CROOKS CAUGHT, CUT RATE!
7

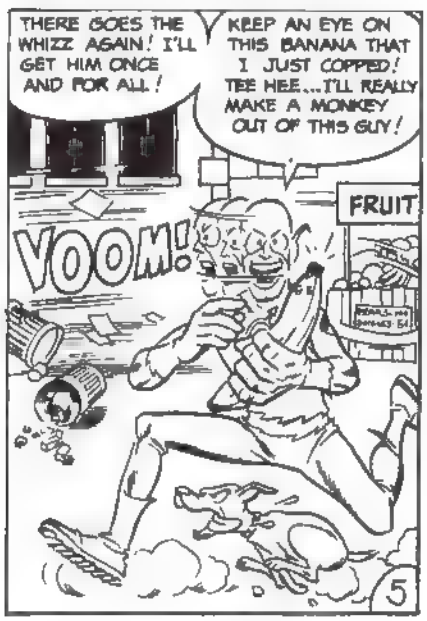
Cover concept:
Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script, pp. 2-7: Len Brown?
Art: Gil Kane and Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman


WE'RE LOOKING FOR PEOPLE WHO LIKE TO DRAW
If you'd like to find out whether you have a talented trigger finger worth developing, write to us and we'll send one of our trained gunmen to have a showdown with you . . . any day at high noon.
Norman "Quickdraw" Inkwell
Write to FAMOUS COMIC ARTISTS Colt 45, Conn.

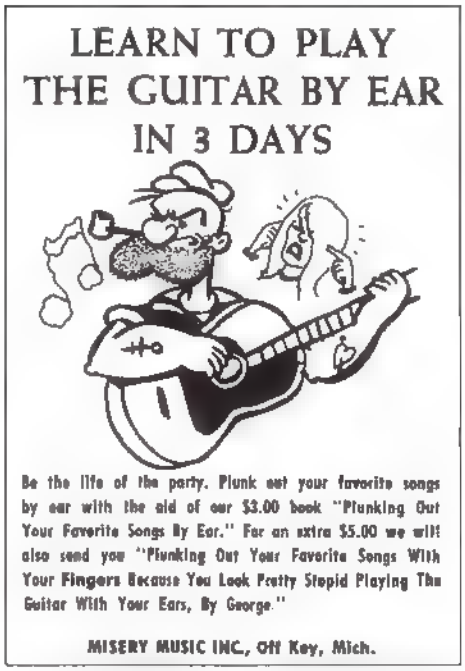
BURY ALVIN (ALIAS THE FLUSH) IS ON HIS WAY TO MEET HIS WIFE, VIRUS, WHEN...
WOWEE! IT'S THAT NEW SUPER-SPEEDING MYSTERY CRIMINAL- THE WHIZZ!
POST NO BILLS
WHIZZ
HELP! HE STOLE MY PURSE CONTAINING 75¢ IN CASH AND MY WAX LIPS!

THEN, QUICK AS A FLASH--ER, WE MEAN...QUICK AS A FLUSH...
I MUST CAPTURE THAT FAST-FOOTED FINK, AND FIND OUT WHO HE IS!
AND I'LL DO IT AS THE FASTEST SUPER-DOER OF THEM ALL-
WHOOOSH!
3



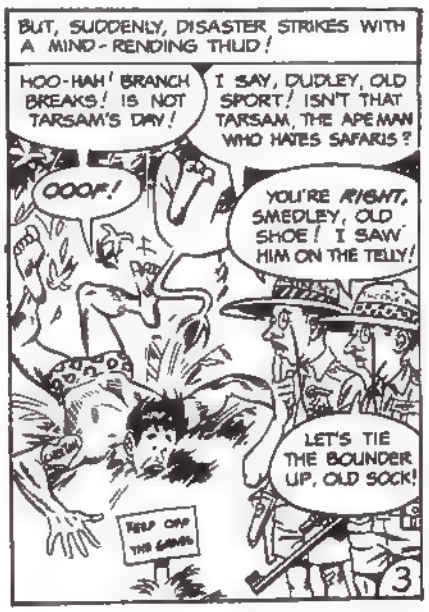

THERE GOES THE WHIZZ AGAIN! I'LL GET HIM ONCE AND FOR ALL!
KEEP AN EYE ON THIS BANANA THAT I JUST COPPED! TEE HEE...I'LL REALLY MAKE A MONKEY OUT OF THIS GUY!
FRUIT
VOOM!
5

AH-HAH! HE'S STOPPING TO AVOID THE BANANA PEEL I TOSSED IN HIS WAY!
...OH, NO! IT'S THE ONE COMIC CHARACTER IN THE WORLD I CAN'T OUTRUN!
FUP!
SCREECH

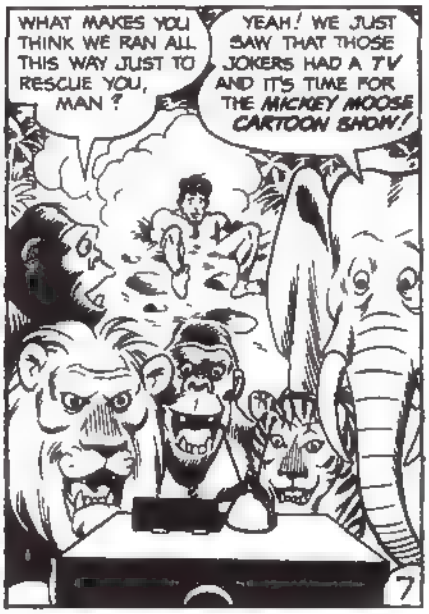

LEARN TO PLAY THE GUITAR BY EAR IN 3 DAYS
Be the life of the party. Plunk out your favorite songs by ear with the aid of our $3.00 book "Plunking Out Your Favorite Songs By Ear." For an extra $5.00 we will also send you "Plunking Out Your Favorite Songs With Your Fingers Because You Look Pretty Stupid Playing The Guitar With Your Ears, By George."
MISERY MUSIC INC., Off Key, Mich.

Cover concept:
Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script, pp. 2-7: Roy Thomas?
Art: Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman

SWINGING THROUGH THE JUNGLE, TARSAM DISCOVERS A MOST UNWELCOME SIGHT!
SO, BIG GAME HUNTERS COME! TARSAM NO LIKE! TARSAM STOMP!
HUP, TWO THREE, OLD CHAPS!
2

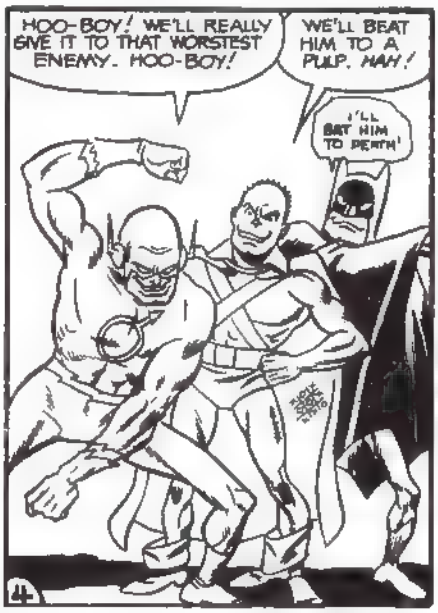

BUT, SUDDENLY, DISASTER STRIKES WITH A MIND-RENDING THUD!
HOO-HAH! BRANCH BREAKS! IS NOT TARSAM'S DAY!
I SAY, DUDLEY, OLD SPORT! ISN'T THAT TARSAM, THE APE MAN WHO HATES SAFARIS?
OOOF!
YOU'RE RIGHT, SMEDLEY, OLD SHOE! I SAW HIM ON THE TELLY!
LET'S TIE THE BOUNDER UP, OLD SOCK!
3

YOU'LL INTERFERE WITH OUR SAFARIS NO MORE, OLD HOT-WATER-BOTTLE! YOU'VE 'AD IT!
WE SEE 'BOUT THAT! YODLE LAY-EE-OH!
I SAY! HE'S CALLING HIS INFERNAL BEASTS!
VINE ST
SONNY
EMERGING NATIONS
SUBMERGING NATIONS


WHAT MAKES YOU THINK WE RAN ALL THIS WAY JUST TO RESCUE YOU, MAN?
YEAH! WE JUST SAW THAT THOSE JOKERS HAD A TV AND IT'S TIME FOR THE MICKEY MOOSE CARTOON SHOW!
7

Cover concept:
Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script, pp. 2-7: Len Brown?
Art: Gil Kane and Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman

AT JESTER'S LEAGUE HEADQUARTERS, THE SPEEDY FLUSH READS A THREATENING NOTE...
THIS NOTE SAYS "DEAR JESTER'S LEAGUE - I HATE YOU. TONIGHT - HEH. HEH - I'LL RUB YOU OUT. SIGNED, YOUR WORSTEST ENEMY."
THINK
2



$5.95
in the U.S.

Vol. 2, No. 2
Summer 1998

Presents

Alter Ego™

STAN LEE Annotates The Very First FANTASTIC FOUR Plot!

Marvel-ous Parodies by GIL KANE and WALLY WOOD

GARDNER FOX: Deep Inside DC Comics 1940 by MICHAEL T. GILBERT

The First Retro-Comic? ROY THOMAS on the Birth of THE INVADERS

Plus Rarely-Seen Art by: JACK KIRBY FRANK ROBBINS JOHN ROMITA GEORGE PAPP DAVE HOOVER and others

The Atom, Batman, Green Lantern, Johnny Thunder ©1998 DC Comics. Captain America, Captain Marvel, The Hulk, Rick Jones, Spider-Man ©1998 Marvel Entertainment. The Shield ©1998 MLJ. Blackmark, His Name Is... Savage ©1998 Gil Kane. All ©1998 Gil Kane.

Rashomon, Mon Amour

THE TROUBLE WITH MEMORY

by Roy Thomas

[Abridged from A/E V2#2]

The most realistic movie of all time is *Rashomon.*

Many readers will already be aware, of course, of the classic 1950 Japanese film from director Akira Kurosawa.

To quote from the 1969 Grove Press edition of the screenplay: "Set in feudal Japan, the story consists of four versions of a rape and violent death that occurred in a woods. Four people involved in the crime relate the versions, and each differs radically from the others. Pauline Kael has called *Rashomon* 'the classic film statement of the relativism, the unknowability of truth.'"

Film critic Kael's succinct quote could serve as the motto of *Comic Book Artist* and *Alter Ego,* as well.

Though I had little to do with *CBA* #1 proper, I was fascinated by how often the accounts of interviewees would diverge widely from each other in relating either an isolated incident or the creative process as a whole.

This is, alas, inevitable.

Even with the best intentions in the world on all sides (something which cannot always be assumed), any two or more persons will witness any given event from different, often opposing, perspectives.

Does this mean that, in any dispute between any two or more witnesses, the precise "truth"—to the extents that such a thing exists at all—is always somewhere *in between?*

Usually—but not always.

Even less so is truth always located smack-dab in the *middle,* halfway between opposing accounts. Sometimes one of the observers or participants may simply be totally (or almost totally) wrong about what he thinks happened, while his opposite number may be largely correct. Some people have steel-trap memories; others have memories that leak like a sieve. All of us recall some events with crystal clarity, while others might as well have taken place on the dark side of the moon.

Then, too, while it's highly unlikely to apply to any instance in this issue, one of the witnesses could be mad as a hatter—or lying through his/her teeth—or both. That's not unknown, in the comics industry any more than anyplace else.

A recent caricature of Ye Editor, done for a Spanish reprint of Marvel's Conan *comics. [Courtesy of Editorial Planeta-de Agostini, Barcelona, Spain.]*

So how can we get around discrepancies?

We can't, not fully—and anyone who thinks he can is a damned fool.

It may be true, as is often quoted, that "History is a lie agreed upon by historians." But professional historians don't always come anywhere close to agreeing even on basic facts. And even in cases where the "facts" are clearly in evidence, there's always the crucial matter of interpretation.

The most we can do in this magazine is try to compare and contrast as many memories, as many opinions, as many first- and second-hand sources (including internal evidence in the comics themselves) as possible, while being aware of their limitations—and then let the reader know what those sources are, so he/she can decide which to believe. (Which is not to say that the reader will then necessarily be *right!*)

Matthew J. Bruccoli, author of *Fitzgerald and Hemingway: A Dangerous Friendship,* has written: "Biography without documentation is a species of fiction." (The same could be said of history, which is the biography of a nation or a culture.)

When we assemble all the facts and viewpoints we can, the so-called "truth" is rarely quite as neat and tied-up-in-a-bow as our original conception had it. Truth is not only stranger than fiction; it is usually far messier.

Or, as I once had Daredevil put it:

"We're all blind men, feeling up the same elephant."

Still, for all our limitations, Jon Cooke and I still believe that what we're doing is ultimately more important than printing the hype-piece for the latest over-muscled, under-brained video-game-on-paper that dominates many current comics-related magazines.

Not only more important, but infinitely more interesting.

That's why we do it.

Roy

A Fantastic First!

THE CREATION OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR — AND BEYOND!

by Roy Thomas

One late-1960s day in New York, Stan Lee asked me to step into his office. As his associate editor and left-hand man, I figured the summons probably meant one of three things:

Jack Kirby's cover for F.F. #1 has become one of the most reproduced—and most influential—since the first issue of Action Comics. *This re-creation is by Jack and Dick Ayers was sold at a Sotheby's auction in 1994. The suggested price was $6,000-$8,000. ©1998 Marvel Entertainment.*

1.) A new comics title had been added to the Marvel schedule (and was doubtless already two weeks late).

2.) It was time to play "musical chairs" again, moving "Artist A" to a new feature (with "Artist B" taking over "A's" current strip, and so on down the line assignment-wise, until a harmonious equilibrium was again achieved—for the moment).

3.) The cover price of comics was going up again (it had already risen since 1961 from 10¢ to 12¢ to 15¢, at the very least; where would it all *end?*).

This time, however, Stan simply had something he wanted to show me: His two-page synop sis for the first half of *Fantastic Four* #1!

He had stumbled onto it the previous day at home, not having realized till then that it still existed. (I'd asked him about such hoary artifacts once or twice, but Stan didn't think he had saved anything. Why should he have? Who could possibly *care?*)

As photocopiers were not then the omnipresent office furniture they've since become—and our photostat machine was 'way too precious to waste on non-essentials—it didn't occur to me to try to make a copy of the synopsis. The more fool, me.

But I did read it through, before giving it back and returning to whatever I'd been doing. And I never forgot certain salient details...

Actually, this wasn't the first early-'60s synopsis of Stan's I'd seen (see latter part of article). And when I'd gone to work for him in July 1965, I'd learned that he was increasingly dispensing with written synopses, with Marvel artists often working merely from brief conversations, in person or over the phone.

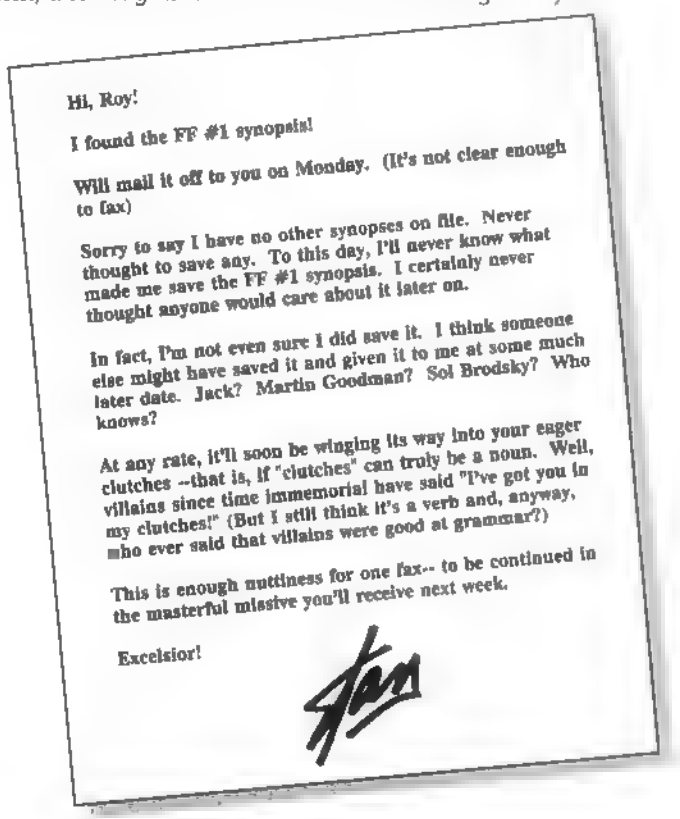
Still, I knew that in my hands was an important document in comics history. For this was the synopsis for the very first issue of the flagship title of what had later become Marvel Comics.

This was the one that had started it all!

CUT TO present-day:

Let it be said at this point that I'm always reluctant to accost Stan out in Los Angeles. Though my erstwhile mentor and I have generally had a good relationship, whether or not I was working for Marvel at the time, I didn't want to impose on him, especially in the midst of all the current *tsuris* at Marvel. But I did, anyway.

Biting the proverbial bullet, I dropped him a note asking if by any chance he still had that *F.F.* #1 plot he'd shown me three decades ago, because I'd like to print it in *Alter Ego*. To my amazement, a few nights later I received the following breezy fax:



Hi, Roy!

I found the FF #1 synopsis!

Will mail it off to you on Monday. (It's not clear enough to fax)

Sorry to say I have no other synopses on file. Never thought to save any. To this day, I'll never know what made me save the FF #1 synopsis. I certainly never thought anyone would care about it later on.

In fact, I'm not even sure I did save it. I think someone else might have saved it and given it to me at some much later date. Jack? Martin Goodman? Sol Brodsky? Who knows?

At any rate, it'll soon be winging its way into your eager clutches --that is, if "clutches" can truly be a noun. Well, villains since time immemorial have said "I've got you in my clutches!" (But I still think it's a verb and, anyway, who ever said that villains were good at grammar?)

This is enough nuttiness for one fax-- to be continued in the masterful missive you'll receive next week.

Excelsior!

Stan

Two days later, I received a photocopy of the synopsis. It might be a bit hard to read in places, Stan explained, because "It was written on an old Remington which apparently had a lousy ribbon."

The synopsis is printed here. (A retyped version appeared without fanfare in the 30th-anniversary *F.F.* #358, Nov. 1991, even duplicating typos such as "synopses" for "synopsis"; but, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first time *the actual document*, including traces of the original words under the crossed-out ones and a few handwritten numbers by Stan, has ever seen print.)

A few easily-guessed letters at the extreme right of both pages were lost at some stage in photocopying; back in 1961 Stan clearly didn't believe in wasting paper by leaving much of a margin on either side. And a few other letters (on the *right*, strangely) were obliterated when perforations were made so the copies—or the original?—could be put in a binder.

So get out your magnifying glasses and/or do a bit of squinting, True Believers (and scoffers, as well)....

SYNOPSES: THE FANTASTIC FOUR JULY '61 SCHEDULE (#1)

STORY #1. INTRODUCTION. "MEET THE FANTASTIC FOUR"

This story is told in 2 chapters. Chapter one is 6 pages long. Chapter 2 is 5 pages.

There are four main characters: 1) REED RICHARDS. (Mr. Fantastic) He is young, handsome scientist. Leader of the four. Invents a space ship to go to Mars. Hopes to be first man to reach Mars.

2) SUSAN STORM. (Invisible Girl) She is Reed's girl friend. She's an actress. Beautiful, glamorous.

3) BEN GRIMM. (The Thing) Ben is very husky, brutish guy. He's a pilot. He falls for Susan also.

4) JOHNNY STORM. (Human Torch) He is Susan's kid brother. A teen-ager. 17 years old. High school star athlete.

Story might open up with a meeting of Fantastic Four. As meeting starts, caption tells reader that we will go back a few weeks to see how it all began....

Reed Richards tells Susan and her brother Johnny that his space ship is finally completed. He hopes to be first man to Mars. But he needs a pilot. They hire Ben Grimm. Ben is huge, surly unpleasant guy who doesn't want any part of project until he sees Susan. He falls for Susan, and she manages to coax him into piloting ship. Ben is crackerjack pilot, ex-war hero, best pilot available.

As the four are about to begin flight, they are warned against it by authorities. Told that no one yet knows what effect cosmic rays will have on human bodies so far out in space. But they decide to go anyway. They fear that if they don't go, Reds may beat us to it.

(NOTE: At the rate the Communists are progressing in space, maybe we better make this a flight to the STARS, instead of just to Mars, because by the time this mag goes on sale, the Russians may have already MADE a flight to Mars!)

So, without clearance from the authorities, in the dead of night, they take off for the nearest star-- very dramatically.

In space, on the way to the stars, POOOF! They are bombarded by cosmic rays which penetrate the ship and which affect all four of the occupants. They can't continue the trip-- have to turn back-- are lucky to land alive. But they are all different now- they sense it- although they don't yet quite know HOW they've changed.

Suddenly, they can't see Susan! But they know she's there! They can HEAR her. They realize she has become invisible. She can not become visible again. Later, she will buy a mask with a face like the one she had and she will have to wear that mask ~~always~~ in order to be seen. Her clothes of course can be seen, so it is only her flesh that is invisible. When she takes her clothes off, she's completely invisible. (I hope this won't seem to corny in art work. Better talk to me about it, ~~Stan~~ Jack-- maybe we'll change this gimmick somewhat).

As for Johnny, Susan's brother, whenever he gets excited, he bursts into flame. Becomes a Human Torch, and can fly, as his body gets lighter than air. BUT doesn't last for more than 5 minutes. At end of five minutes, his flame goes out and he becomes normal again, until he gets excited again. But can't flame on for at least 5 minutes after he's gotten back to normal. Comics Association told us he may never burn anyone with flame, he may only burn ropes, doors, etc.--never people. And, he cannot toss fireballs as the old Human Torch could. His biggest asset is that he can fly.

more--

They think Reed Richards, the pilot, is unaffected by cosmic rays, as he seems normal-- UNTIL he tries to reach for something. Then they realize his arm has STRETCHED toward the thing he reached for. After awhile they realize Reed's body has become like RUBBER. He can get skinny, elongated, anything that you can do with rubber. He can squeeze thru key-holes, etc. Of course, the more stretched-out he gets, the weaker he gets-- but the point remains that he can twist and stretch his body into almost any shape. (He can even alter the appearance of his face to make himself look like someone else) BUT it is quite painful to do all this, so he can only maintain the strange shapes for a very short period of time until the pain gets to be unbearable.

Finally, Ben Grimm steps out of the shadows. They all gasp-- his body has changed in the most grotesque way of all. He's sort of shapeless-- he's become a THING. And, he's grown more fantastically powerful than any other living thing. He is stronger than an elephant. BUT, he is so heavy that he moves very slowly-- he's very ponderous, and these slow, ponderous movements should make him look very dramatic. He cannot alter his appearance as the others can, so he must wear a coat with turned-up collar, sunglasses, slouch hat, and gloves when he goes out in public. But when he takes 'em off, he is a THING!

So much for who they are and how they got that way. Now, here's a gimmick I think we might play up to advantage: Let's make The Thing the heavy- in other words, he's not really a good guy. He's part of the ~~Four~~ Fantastic Four because they all got that way together and they decide to remain a team, and also because he has a crush on Susan-- but actually, he is jealous of Mr. Fantastic and dislikes Human Torch because Torch always sides with Fantastic. ~~My~~ Let's treat him so that reader is always afraid he will sabotage the Fantastic Four's efforts at whatever they are doing-- he isn't interested in helping mankind the way the other three are-- he is more interested in winning Susan away from Mr. Mr. Fantastic. (We might indicate that he feels he may return to his normal self at any time, because none of them know how long their strange powers will last- or whether or the effect of the cosmic rays will one day wear off them).

Anyway, the four of them decide to form a ~~unit~~ unit-- they think it is ~~as~~ an act of Fate which made them as they are and they think they owe it to fate to use their powers to help mankind. So they adopt their new names: HUMAN TORCH, MR. FANTASTIC, INVISIBLE GIRL, and THE THING, and vow to spend their lives fighting all sorts of evil menaces which the normal forces of the world cannot cope with. And, to keep it all from getting too goody-goody, there is always friction between Mr. Fantastic and The Thing, with Human Torch siding with Mr. F. Also, the other three are always afraid of The Thing getting out of their control some day and harming mankind with his amazing strength. Occasionally also, you might have the Thing wanting to do something for personal profit- and the other 3 try to stop him. In other words, the Thing doesn't have the ethics that the other three have, and consequently he will probably be the most interesting one to the reader, because he'll always be unpredictable.

So much for the introduction-- the preceding should have covered exactly 11 pages, consisting of 2 chapters. (Chapter one: 6 pages. Chapter 2: 5 pages)

The next two chapters, in which the Fantastic Four undertakes their first case, will ~~also~~ be ~~two~~ 3 chapters for a ~~certain~~ total of ~~20~~ 13 pages-- ~~5 pages to each chapter~~ (3,5,5.)

And there you have it—less important than the Magna Carta, no doubt, but certainly 'way more significant than most other comics-related items which have seen the light of day since 1961—or before, for that matter.

In answer to my earlier query, Stan sent a few comments along with the synopsis:

"Incidentally, I didn't discuss it with Jack first. I wrote it first, after telling Jack it was for him because I knew he was the best guy to draw it.

"P.S.: As you are probably aware, the biggest change that was made after the synopsis was written, was—

"I decided to make the Thing more sympathetic than originally intended. After seeing the way Jack drew him, I felt it was too obvious for such an ugly, monstrous-looking guy to act in a typically monstrous, menacing way.

"Jack totally agreed, and the Thing ended up adding more comedy than menace to the strip. (He'd prove to be menacing only to the bad guys—not to our heroes.)

"There! Now scholars of the future and academicians every-

where can relax and breathe easier. The truth is out. The cause of literature hath been well served.

"Only the Pulitzer is wanting!

"(Just to prove corniness doesn't fadeth with the years!)"

Of course, the change in the Thing from threatening to sympathetic wasn't quite total, since Ben Grimm was considered a menace by his compeers for the first few issues, though more because of his unpredictability than because he was evil. Nor was that the only change that occurred between the synopsis and the printed *Fantastic Four* #1.

Thus, girding my loins in the interests of the goddess Historia, I faxed Stan a few additional questions, inviting him to respond only if he wished to and had time. The next day, he graciously phoned me from Hollywood in between meetings and quickly went over my queries point by point:

1.) Since the 11 pages allotted for the first part had become 13—with the flashback-origin squeezed into a mere five—I'd asked if Jack had added the action-packed 8-page intro on his own; it shows Reed summoning his three comrades with a signal in the sky, to which they respond in ways that reveal their powers to the reader. Stan said that might have been Jack's idea, or his own later suggestion; he didn't remember, after so many years, though he tended toward giving Jack the credit.

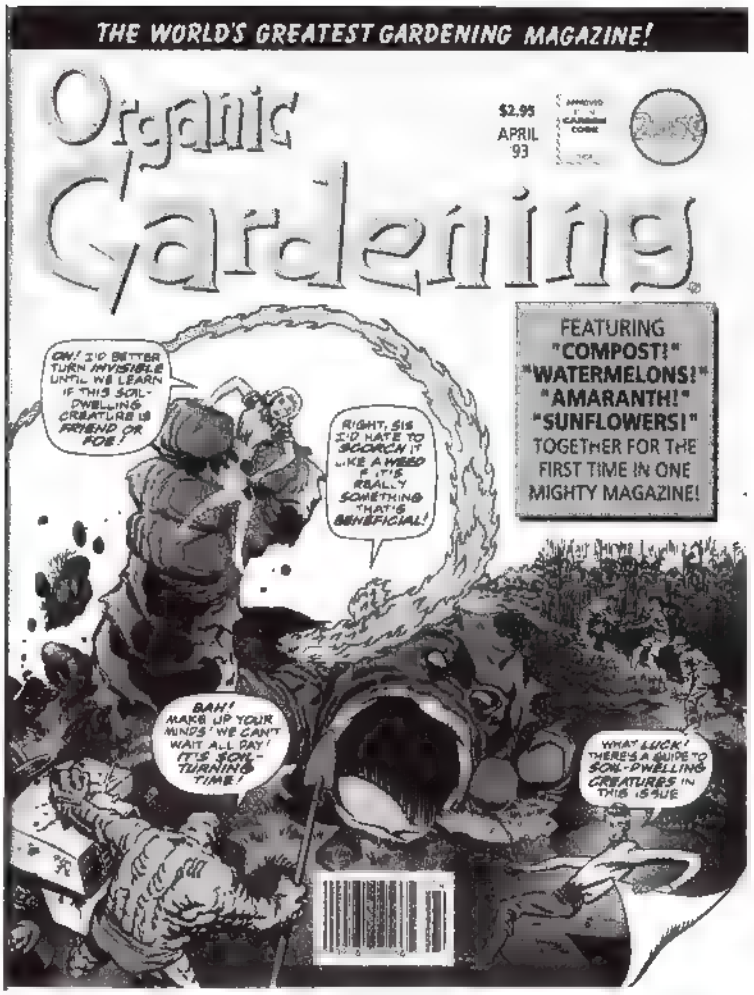
2.) Reed is described as "young," but in the finished comic he sports white hair on his temples. Stan said he'd liked that look on a then-current comic strip hero—"maybe Steve Canyon." (But Milt Caniff's USAF stalwart had all-blond locks, so most likely it was Kerry Drake, Rex Morgan, Judge Parker, or some lesser light of the funny papers.)

3.) Surprisingly, Susan Storm was originally intended to be a beautiful, glamorous "actress." Stan suspects that, since the page-count given to the actual origin had been more than cut in half, and nothing in Jack's pencils overtly indicated an acting career, he probably dropped that notion when writing the dialogue. (Jack's artwork would have supported scripting Sue as either actress or simply "the girlfriend.")

4.) The twin concepts of Ben Grimm as just a pilot Reed hired for a single mission, and of Ben's being smitten with Sue, were both likewise dropped—again perhaps because of the truncation of the origin. Any such information could have been imparted only via dialogue, and would have slowed the story as penciled.

5.) Re the idea of Sue remaining permanently invisible and having to wear a humanoid face-mask to been seen—well, Stan's note at the end of that paragraph indicates he was already re-thinking that bit; he asked Jack to talk with him about it, because "maybe we'll change this gimmick somewhat." Since the writer/editor and artist probably discussed this point before Jack started drawing, any number of other changes—including the notion of starting with a multi-page action sequence—may have been suggested then, as well, by either man. In any event, Sue gained control of her invisibility almost at once.

6.) One of the most intriguing things about the synopsis is that, near the end of the paragraph re Sue's invisibility, Stan addresses the artist—and a word is crossed out before the typed "Jack." The final letter of the marked-out five-letter word seems to be a "y" or "g"—while the second-from-last letter has a vertical "mast" at left, like a "b." Did Stan type "Kirby" for some reason, then cross it out and substitute the more usual "Jack"—or is it maybe, just maybe, possible that Stan originally had a different artist in mind? Stan says it's highly unlikely he ever considered anyone but Jack to draw *F.F.* #1—but I'd give a whole run of "Heroes Reborn" to be able to see that crossed-out word!


THE WORLD'S GREATEST GARDENING MAGAZINE!
Organic Gardening
$2.95
APRIL '93
FEATURING "COMPOST!" "WATERMELONS!" "AMARANTH!" "SUNFLOWERS!" TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ONE MIGHTY MAGAZINE!
OH! I'D BETTER TURN INVISIBLE UNTIL WE LEARN IF THIS SOIL-DWELLING CREATURE IS FRIEND OR FOE!
RIGHT, SIS I'D HATE TO SCORCH IT LIKE A WEED IF IT'S REALLY SOMETHING THAT'S BENEFICIAL!
BAH! MAKE UP YOUR MINDS! WE CAN'T WAIT ALL DAY! IT'S SOIL-TURNING TIME!
WHAT LUCK! THERE'S A GUIDE TO SOIL-DWELLING CREATURES IN THIS ISSUE

A Kirby homage from the "real" world: the cover to Organic Gardening *Vol. 40, No. 4, April 1993. Art by Ron Frenz & Al Milgrom. Fantastic Four ©1998 Marvel.*

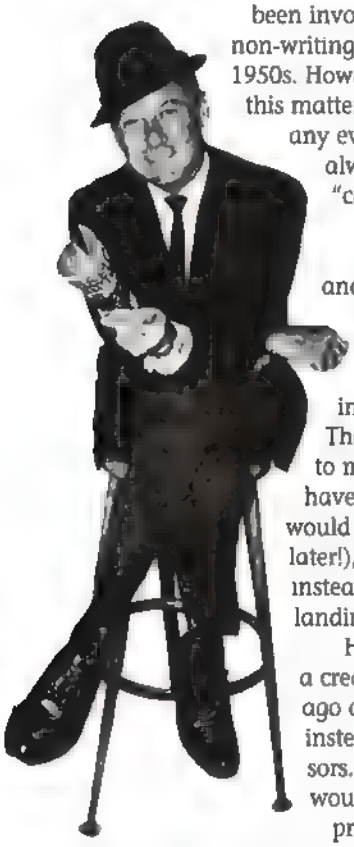
7.) Clearly, Stan had intended the powers of both Johnny and Reed to be far more limited; in Reed's case, the synopsis indicates that stretching caused him considerable pain. Stan recalls that, when Jack's pencils came in, there was strain but not pain in Reed's face, so he downplayed that notion. (Also, Reed's shape-changing and chameleon powers became considerably more restricted than the synopsis indicates. But then, I recall Stan telling me in '65 that he always felt Reed's power was potentially too humorous and never wanted him to become another Plastic Man.)

8.) One argument often used to "prove" that Jack Kirby created the Fantastic Four pretty much on his own is that the concept of four people going up in a vehicle which crashes back to earth (though without their gaining super-powers), after which they dedicate themselves to serving mankind, had been the basis of DC's "Challengers of the Unknown" origin in *Showcase* #5, 1956—an origin story penciled by Jack.

Stan, whom I never knew during the 1960s to pay much attention to what the competition was doing, said he can't recall ever seeing that story, though he couldn't swear he didn't; he laughed self-deprecatingly, saying he'd thought the story he gave Jack was new and wildly original: "Show's what I know!"

And indeed, the origin in *F.F.* #1 is more different from that in *Showcase* #5 than the brief description above indicates, since in 1956 the future Challengers were merely flying through a storm in an airplane which crashed, while in 1961 Reed and Co. went up in a spaceship that was downed by cosmic rays.

Besides, Dave Wood, not Jack, is usually credited with writing the Challengers' origin. though Kirby and even Joe Simon may have



This photo of Stan Lee was taken in autumn of 1965, for printing on the inside front cover of Fantasy Masterpieces *#1 (cover date Feb. 1966)*

been involved. DC editors didn't generally bring non-writing artists into plot conferences in the 1950s. However, if anyone has any hard evidence on this matter, *A/E* most definitely wants to see it! In any event, Stan repeated once again that he's always considered Jack very much a "collaborator" on *F.F.* #1, not just the artist.

Though I didn't query Stan about it, another intriguing item in the synopsis is the switching of destinations in mid-stream!

When Stan started typing, he intended Reed's ship to be bound for Mars. Then suddenly he interrupted the synopsis to muse over whether the Russians might have already reached Mars by the time *F.F.* #1 would hit the newsstands (only a few months later!), and the destination became "the stars" instead. This in a day eight years before a landing on the moon!

Here we see, as elsewhere in the synopsis, a creative mind at work in the long-ago days of typewriters instead of word processors. Nowadays, Stan would have simply pressed a "delete" key, and any superceded thoughts would've been forever lost before he sent the synopsis to Jack!

Another fascinating bit of information gleaned from the synopsis is that Stan had obviously checked certain aspects of the story in advance with the Comics Code Authority.

This was probably because Martin Goodman's comics company (which wouldn't call itself "Marvel" till *F.F.* #14, cover-dated May 1963) was getting back into the super-hero game after six years—for the first time since the cancellation of the revived *Sub-Mariner* mag in '55—and Stan didn't want any problems with regard to the Human Torch!

At the bottom of the first page, Stan says the "Comics Association told me he may never burn anyone with flame, he may only burn ropes, doors, etc.—never people. And, he cannot toss fireballs as the old Human Torch could. His biggest asset is that he can fly."

Yet, by *F.F.* #9, Johnny suddenly tossed a "fireball" (actually called that in dialogue!) to fuse the ground ahead into a roadway for his sports car; the Code seemed not to notice, or at least to care—and the "no fireballs" rule became a dead letter.

One other question I couldn't resist asking Stan on the phone:

One of the great early-60s mysteries is the identity of the inker(s) of *F.F.* #1-4, before Joe Sinnott and Dick Ayers arrived on the scene with #5-6. Recently, writer Mark Evanier theorized that #1-2 may have been inked by the talented George Klein, in 1961 mostly a DC inker who would go to work for Marvel late in the decade, not long before his untimely death.

Stan doubted Klein was the inker, but couldn't rule it out. He said he'd "always" assumed Ayers had inked those issues (as had many of us for years), but evidently he was wrong.

I asked if the inker might possibly have been Sol Brodsky, who had become Marvel's full-time production manager by 1965 (see Sol's inking of John Buscema's cover for *Sub-Mariner* #1 in 1968).

Stan replied, "Listen, you could tell me anybody, and I wouldn't have the slightest idea."

Case not yet closed... though I kinda hope Mark's right.

When Roy Thomas became editor-in-chief in 1972, he also became F.F. scripter. For a re-telling of the origin, John Buscema and Joe Sinnott took the artistic liberty of putting the foursome in costume in their very first adventure.©1998 Marvel

MARVEL COMICS GROUP
WHAT IF THE Fantastic Four HAD NOT GAINED THEIR SUPER-POWERS?
NOVA!
TALES of VENGEANCE
AVENGERS WEST COAST

When John Byrne got hold of a good thing, he went with it! — First in What If *#36, then in* Avengers West Coast *#54 ©1998 Marvel*

As I said earlier, the synopsis for #1 wasn't the first *F.F.* plot I'd seen.

Over Thanksgiving weekend in 1963, while the nation mourned the assassination of President John F. Kennedy the week before, I took a train from St. Louis to Detroit to spend a subdued holiday with Jerry Bails, college-prof founder of *Alter Ego*.

There, he showed me an item Stan Lee had recently sent him: the "script" for *Fantastic Four* #8. "Knowing" that comic book artists always worked from a script as detailed as a Hollywood screenplay, I was surprised to see that what Jerry had received was merely a plot, its first page covering the initial 13 pages of the comic, and that it was clearly meant as a blueprint from which the artist would break down the tale into pictures.

"Marvel artists work from this?" I asked. Jerry said apparently so; Stan added dialogue and captions later. I shook my head; it seemed to me like a helluva way to run a railroad. (Yeah, as it turned out—*a good* one!) Evidently Stan Lee trusted artists like Kirby, Ditko, *et al.*, to both pace out and flesh out the story.

Truth to tell, neither Jerry nor I can recall whether he ever possessed the entire synopsis, or merely the first of two pages—because, in an early comics "apa" ("amateur press association," a breed of low-circulation fanzine 'way too esoteric to explain here), he retyped and printed only page one. Jerry feels that, if he'd had the whole synopsis, he would probably have printed both pages.

Here is the synopsis (retyped for clarity) for Pages 1-13 of *Fantastic Four* #8, as seen in *Kappa-Alpha* #2, Nov. 1964:

SYNOPSIS for FANTASTIC FOUR #8 "Prisoners of Puppet Master!"

(5 pages): Thing enters headquarters. Mr. F working on something in lab which he doesn't want Thing to see-- tells Torch to keep Thing out. Torch tosses up wall of flame between them. Thing gets angry-- feels they are keeping secrets from him. Says he's thru-- storms out. I.G. runs after him-- to cool him off. Becomes invisible so as not to attract attention to herself in her uniform-- people stare at invisible gal talking to Thing. They suddenly see a guy about to jump off a bridge. I.G. shoots flare over guy's head Mr. F sees it-- tries to reach out of window to grab guy-- too far to reach-- Torch flies toward guy and saves him. Guy is in a daze-- doesn't know why he did it-- is a congressman. Across town the villain has observed what happened through binoculars-- angry-- FF frustrated him. He has a small model of bridge and a small model of congressman on table-- he made congressman walk off bridge by manipulating the small puppet of him Now Puppet Master will make puppets of FF and destroy them! He has blind daughter-- pretty. (He plans to demonstrate his powers to the world, and then sell his services to nation which is the highest bidder.)

(5 pages): Puppet Master figures easiest thing to do is let FF destroy themselves-- he makes only one puppet-- the Thing. He will let the Thing who is strongest destroy the others. He moves puppet to a model of his own apartment so that Thing will come to him. In street, Thing suddenly gets in to a daze, and heads for Puppet Master's apt., followed by I.G. Thing, under PM's spell, reveals I.G.'s presence, some interesting scenes showing how PM tries to capture her, and he finally succeeds, helped by blind daughter who can sense things unseen. PM commands Thing to return and slay Mr. F and Torch-- he also tells his daughter to go WITH Thing, dressed in I.G.'s costume, to throw them off-guard. Then. PM makes puppet of warden of state prison-- gonna get him to realize all the hundreds of dangerous prisoners, to prove his power. IG strains to escape bonds and stop him.

(3 pages): Thing enters FF headquarters with Blind gal. Starts to fight Mr. F-- knocks out Torch before Torch can burst into flame. Mr. F runs into lab-- Thing follows-- gets exposed to artificial rays-- becomes human-- but only for as long as he is under rays-- Mr. F tells him the rays are what he was working on earlier-- to make Thing human-- but didn't want Thing to know until they were perfected-- because didn't want Thing to be disappointed. Not perfected yet-- still has to find a way to make results more lasting Blind gal can't understand-- tells Thing she thinks he is handsome-- his voice-- his character- etc.-- while in human form the Puppet Master's spell is broken-- he is now ashamed of himself. Mr. F realizes blind gal is not I.G.-- wonders where I.G. is - we switch to Puppet Master-- he has opened prison gates (thru control of warden) and now is making a doll to finish off I.G.

And there the page ends.

So much like the synopsis I would later see years later for *F.F.* #1—and yet so much unlike, at the same time!

For, on that single sheet, Stan Lee had laid out more than half the story for Jack Kirby in 3- to 5-page segments, something he hadn't done for #1.

The whole basic storyline for those 13 pages was there; and while there was ample room for the artist to embellish the story while breaking it down into pictures, the synopsis was quite detailed in its compact way, even though the "blind gal" is not yet named Alicia (let alone Alicia Masters).

Take the rescue of the suicidal man controlled by a villain soon identified as the Puppet Master: When Sue ("I.G.") runs out of FF-HQ after the Thing, Stan specifies not only that she becomes invisible but that people stare at the Thing talking to apparently nobody. The synopsis indicates that Reed tries to stretch to save the man when he jumps off a bridge, but it's too far to reach, so the Torch has to grab him. All this was faithfully rendered in the artwork.

Still, Jack added his own pacing and a couple of important details. He introduces the Puppet Master before the Torch saves the man, rather than after, so we can see how the villain controls his victim, by pushing a tiny image of him off a model bridge. And—a nice visual touch!—Jack has the Puppet Master burn his fingers on the miniature figure when the Torch catches the man. (Dramatic license, really, since Johnny hadn't burned the victim, so there was no logical reason for the PM's pinkies to get burned!)

Instead of the victim being a "congressman," in the published comic he becomes (in the Puppet Master's phrase) "a nameless nobody." Did Jack indicate this demotion in the border notes which he (and other artists) generally wrote to guide the scripter? Or did Stan decide, when writing dialogue, that he wasn't drawn to look like a congressman, nor was such political status in any way germane to the story?

If photostats of Jack's original pencils still exist, they would answer that question; but either way, this shows Stan and Jack working together as a well-oiled machine at the time of *F.F.* #8.

Stan wasn't simply giving his best artist a storyline and expecting him to draw it without adding or subtracting (or thinking); nor at that stage was he asking Jack to do much more than tell the synopsized story in exciting pictures.

Jack, for his part, wasn't just mindlessly illustrating another man's plot; neither was he making up major portions of the story as he went along. That would come later, as Marvel expanded and Stan (like Reed Richards) stretched himself thinner and thinner—with or without accompanying pain.

F.F. #8 was Stan Lee's story at the outset, but Jack Kirby was a trusted and talented collaborator in every way. By the end, it had become not Stan's story, not Jack's story, but *their* story.

As I said, Stan and Jack's method of working together was already changing by the time I came to work at Marvel in mid-'65, and it continued to evolve until Jack abruptly left for DC in 1970.

However, these two synopses provide a tantalizing window on the first year and a half of what became the Marvel Comics Group—and on the Lee/Kirby team that changed comics forever.

Internal Affairs: DC in the 1940s

THE GARDNER FOX LETTERS, PART TWO

by Michael T. Gilbert

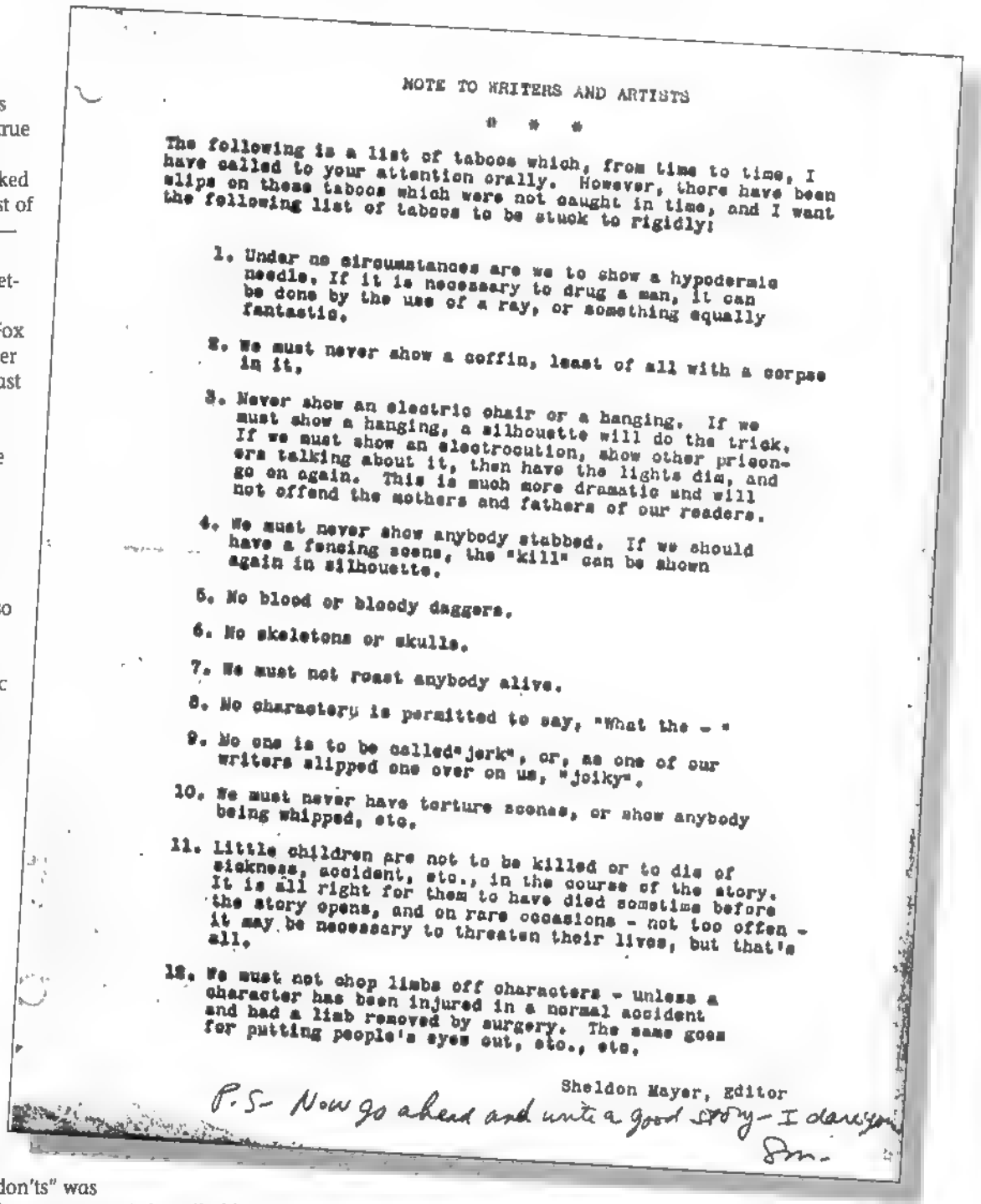
Rummaging through comics history is always a treat for the true comics fan!

In *Alter Ego* Vol. 2 #1 we looked at several letters from fans—most of whom later became comics pros—sent to DC writer Gardner F. Fox between 1959 and 1965. These letters, and much more, are in the University of Oregon's Gardner Fox Collection, donated by the scripter in the late 1960s, as recounted last issue.

Recently, at the University, I got to shuffle through even more correspondence of the legendary co-creator of the original Flash, the Silver Age Atom, Adam Strange, both versions of Hawkman, Dr. Fate, the Justice Society, the Justice League, and so many more features of comics' first few decades.

This time, a bit of true comic book history caught my eye: rarely-seen *internal correspondence* sent to Fox and others in the 1940s by the powers-that-were at DC Comics, which till 1945 was actually two companies: Detective Comics, Inc. and All-American Comics, Inc., loosely allied under the DC symbol. Fox wrote for both companies, though primarily for the latter.

For the most part, the papers speak for themselves, so I'll keep my introductory comments brief. Let's start with...



NOTE TO WRITERS AND ARTISTS

* * *

The following is a list of taboos which, from time to time, I have called to your attention orally. However, there have been slips on these taboos which were not caught in time, and I want the following list of taboos to be stuck to rigidly:

1. Under no circumstances are we to show a hypodermic needle. If it is necessary to drug a man, it can be done by the use of a ray, or something equally fantastic.

2. We must never show a coffin, least of all with a corpse in it.

3. Never show an electric chair or a hanging. If we must show a hanging, a silhouette will do the trick. If we must show an electrocution, show other prisoners talking about it, then have the lights dim, and go on again. This is much more dramatic and will not offend the mothers and fathers of our readers.

4. We must never show anybody stabbed. If we should have a fencing scene, the "kill" can be shown again in silhouette.

5. No blood or bloody daggers.

6. No skeletons or skulls.

7. We must not roast anybody alive.

8. No characters is permitted to say, "What the - "

9. No one is to be called "jerk", or, as one of our writers slipped one over on us, "jelky".

10. We must never have torture scenes, or show anybody being whipped, etc.

11. Little children are not to be killed or to die of sickness, accident, etc., in the course of the story. It is all right for them to have died sometime before the story opens, and on rare occasions - not too often - it may be necessary to threaten their lives, but that's all.

12. We must not chop limbs off characters - unless a character has been injured in a normal accident and had a limb removed by surgery. The same goes for putting people's eyes out, etc., etc.

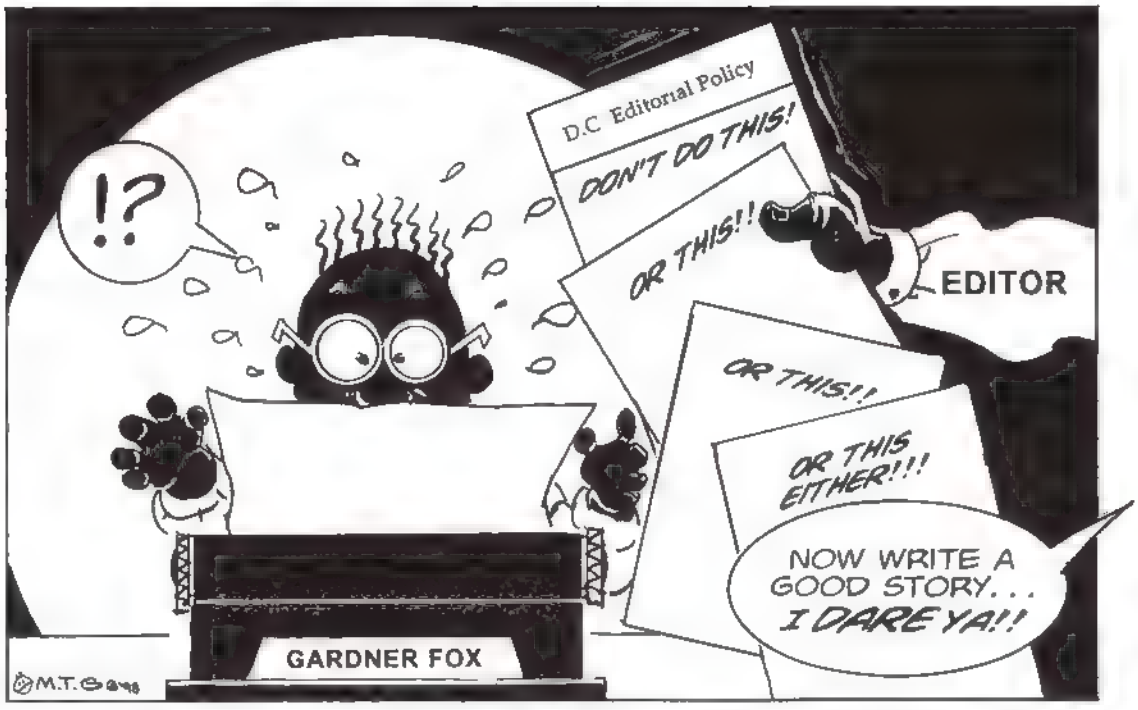
Sheldon Mayer, editor

P.S- Now go ahead and write a good story - I dare you!

Sm-

NOTE TO WRITERS AND ARTISTS: This list of "do's and don'ts" was sent to Fox by the equally legendary cartoonist/editor Sheldon Mayer. Unfortunately, it is undated, but Mayer was an editor for the All-American/DC comics line (whose top heroes were Wonder Woman, the Flash, and Green Lantern) from 1939 to 1948; so it was almost certainly written somewhere within that time frame, and probably on the early side.

In 1938, Mayer had changed the face of comics history by contributing to the chain of circumstances which led Detective Comics, Inc., to include Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's "Superman" comic strip in the first issue of *Action Comics*. He also, of course, wrote and



drew a number of delightful features over a period of 50 years, including *Scribbly* and *Sugar & Spike*.

I particularly enjoyed DC's point 7 ("We must not roast anybody alive."), and Mayer's wry handwritten commentary at the bottom of the page.

LETTER OF 10/16/40: DC editor Murray Boltinoff (who at this early date would have been at most an assistant editor) sent this missive specifically to Fox, with notes from himself and editor Whitney Ellsworth to improve his work. While the suggestions were specifically tailored to Fox, many of today's writers could learn a lot from these comments!

October 16, 1940

Dear Gardner:

As a result of several story conferences, Mr. Ellsworth and I agreed to pass some helpful hints to you in writing your stories. We would appreciate your cooperation.

1. Do not waste panels. Where action can be confined within one or two panels, do so. Do not toss in an episode entirely irrelevant to the story simply for suspense. Suspense should be gotten out of the mounting situation itself.
2. Qualify your statements. If the villain dislikes the hero, tell the readers why.
3. Be careful how you word your captions and scenes. In some cases, you say one thing in the caption, and an entirely different incident occurs in the description to the artist. This leads to confusion. Also, if a man strikes another, don't force a lengthy speech on him. Keep it natural and punchy!
4. Use a little imagination in getting the hero out of a scrape. Don't just have him bop the villain, snatch the gun and take command of the situation. His escape should have some plan, some suspense... He might talk to himself in balloons to indicate what he is thinking. Behind all this, there should be a situation, climaxing in the hero's escape.
5. In some instances, Oriental and gangster dialect is overdone.
6. Keep your captions short and punchy.
7. Proper names should be consistent throughout the story. So should costumes, unless you indicate a change to the artist.
8. Incidentally, lay off names of specific nationalities. Don't make a Bund member Irish, or all gangsters Italian. Play safe by using Anglo-Saxon names.
9. Try to be careful with your grammar. Don't use learn for teach; everybody demands his, not theirs; watch punctuation, use commas instead of dashes unless you want emphasis; and be careful of your spelling.
10. Do not use "What the—!" "I'll be—!" "Thank God!" and similar exclamations that infer the word "damned" or involve Deity. Instead, use "What---!" or something almost innocuous.
11. Don't have the FBI man congratulated at the end. He is only doing his duty in capturing criminals. Give the final panel some variety.
12. Try to work in new settings. Get away from interiors of houses and offices, racing automobiles. Bear in mind the picture that is drawn.
13. Do not use airplanes unless they are vitally required in the story. There is nothing so static as an airplane when it is drawn.
14. We are adapting the pulp style of writing to our magazines. Start off with action to attract the reader's attention. Then, you can either flash back or proceed. And keep your story alive and intriguing with twists.

Yrs

Murray

THE DC COMICS GROUP EDITORIAL REQUIREMENTS: This is a three-page primer which was sent to all DC's writers sometime in the early 1940s, explaining what the company wanted in stories it published, and what to avoid. A number of the villains mentioned are before my time (The Needle, Mr. Zero, and Professor Merlin)—but they sure sound interesting!

THE DC COMIC GROUP
Editorial Requirements

The DC group of comic magazines offer a wide-open market for the action story writer with a visual imagination. More than fifty glamorous heroes parade through the pages of our magazines in every month's issues... and we are looking for dramatic stories featuring these characters in action.

The ingredients of the successful comic story are similar in numerous respects to the adult pulpyarn. A rapid-fire action

pace from start to finish; a colorful locale; an intriguing menace; and a hero who uses his wits as well as his weapons and fists to overcome obstacles... combine these requisites and a pretty decent story is often the result.

ACTION:

Action should be tricky, never in the story merely for purposes of padding or for action's sake. The action should contribute to the consecutive and logical development of the story. Many writers frequently obtain a photograph of the setting for their action, are thus able to avail themselves of all the props.

All-Star Comics #11 may pre-date DC's prohibition against stabbing—or maybe it was all right for our soldiers to stab our Axis enemies. [Thanks to Joel Thingvall.] Reproduced from original art. ©1998 DC Comics.

Action sequence—example: Hero is pursuing villian *[sic]* in street. The villian *[sic]* passes a garage, in front of which are piled a stack of tires. Hero spots the tires, flings them one at a time in succession at the fleeing villain, imprisons him in a column of tires. Moments later, when the henchmen of villain attack the hero, the hero topples the tire-imprisoned villain, rolls him into the path of the advancing henchmen.

While panels showing the hero in physical combat with villains are desirable, beware of repetitious sequences where we merely see an exchange of blows, with hero emerging victorious. The hero should make use of the props about him... if he is fighting a villain near a plane, hero can twirl the propellor so that one end hits villain on end. If aboard a boat, hero can fling a life preserver about villain, thus disengaging him from combat.

LOCALE:

Good, colorful locales are half the story, and will frequently develop the plot. Death Valley... the Petrified Forest... the circus... Chinatown... the opera... a streamlined express... a gambling ship... a rodeo... these are some of the locales of previously published stories. But numerous other locales exist, and it is the writer's job to make use of them. Or the aforementioned locales can be used again, with new twists.

MENACE:

A good menace... a worthy opponent to test the hero's mettle... is another important element. Examples:

THE NEEDLE: a tall, needle-like villain who uses a gun that fires needles.

THE JOKER: a villain dressed in the garb of a harlequin... looks like the joker in a deck of playing cards. He uses a deadly gas that makes his victims have a joker-like grin on their faces in death, due to contortion of the facial muscles.

MR. ZERO: the man of a million murders... uses a different murder method with every victim... no two alike.

THE PENGUIN: a short, penguin-faced man, who waddles when he walks. Always carries an umbrella... uses his umbrella as a sword, a gun... to conceal gems in its hollow interior, blow darts, etc.

PROFESSOR MERLIN: an erudite criminal who runs a crime college. Instructs members of his class in various crime courses... forgery... counterfeiting... arson... etc. Teaches his men to plan jobs with model replicas of real things, etc.

INGENUITY:

Hero should, wherever possible, win out by use of his wits... then follow up with his fists and weapons. For example, if the hero is tied up in a room, and villain has flooded the room with poison gas, don't have hero escape by struggling with his bonds, finally breaking them. He can escape by slipping one shoe off his foot, kicking his shoe so that it bursts window, letting fresh air in.

Or if hero is tied up, and has to get out quickly, don't resort to hackneyed device of hero extracting a steel blade from heel of shoe, or a knife from pocket. Plant the fact that a glass bottle is on the floor. Hero rolls over, lets the streaming sun's rays pass thru the bottle. The glass acts as a magnifying glass... and hero is able to burn the ropes.

Avail yourself of natural props, so that when the hero escapes he is not pulling anything out of a hat. The reader should be able to say to himself, "Clever stunt... I wish I'd thought of that!"

Hero can always be resourceful in planning a clever trap for the villain... he can dope out a way of using the villain's own set-up against him.

MYSTERY:

Suspense should be generated in all stories... and a strong mystery element is one of the best ways of introducing this element. Who, how and why can always make good mysterious *[sic]*. Any one of them is good enough.

For example... one of several characters is the killer. It is the hero's job to dope out which of the several characters in the story is really the criminal. Hero should deduce the villain's identity cleverly, by making use of clues scattered throughout the story. The reader should have a chance to match wits with the hero, trying to guess for himself who the killer is. Never have a villain who is not on-stage for the first part of the story. If he comes in at the end, the reader has no chance to guess his identity. It's unfair.

"The hero should make use of the props about him." A colorful Dr. Fate action sequence from All-Star, by Fox and Sherman. [Thanks to Joel Thingvall.] ©1998 DC Comics

If you choose to make the mystery element depend on the why... that is, the motive for the crimes... be certain to have a plausible motive. You can open your story with a series of scenes showing men killed whose last names begin with a Z. Or a series of scenes wherein the reader sees white horses slain... a policeman's white horse... a polo player's white horse... a white race horse. Suspense is built up because it is the hero's job to solve the set-up... WHY are all these things happening?

The HOW angle can also be utilized. Men suddenly burst into flames... HOW? Victims receive notes telling them they will die at exactly midnight, despite any precautions that *[sic]* might take. They are killed. HOW?

Thus, by the use of any of these suspense elements, the story is automatically well on the road to having something different to say.

CAPTION:

The narrative technique in comic strips is necessary, and is derived from the use of short, punchy captions. Captions should be used judiciously... to accept the eerie atmosphere... to make transitions... to explain... to contribute suspense.

Action verbs in captions will help greatly to give the story a strong feeling of pace. Verbs like: plunges, whips, races, darts, plummets, etc. Good, colorful similies help: "Like a runaway meteor, BATMAN hurls himself at his opponent"/ "The alarm speeds thru the underworld with the fury of a raging forest fire." Etc.

DIALOGUE:

Every panel should contain some dialogue Of course, there are exceptions, such as the depiction of a head-on train collision.

Here ends the memo as it exists in the Fox collection—at the bottom of its third page. If there were any further pages, concerning dialogue or other matters, they must have become detached and lost over the intervening decades....

DETECTIVE COMICS LETTER 6/25/43: Editor Bernard Breslauer is writing about a "Seven Soldiers of Victory" story Fox was scripting for *Leading Comics* The Soldiers were the Detective Comics line's answer to the Justice Society of America in *All-Star Comics*, published by its All-American sister company and written by Fox. The Seven Soldiers were Green Arrow and Speedy, Star-Spangled Kid and Stripesy, Vigilante, Shining Knight, and Crimson Avenger.

PLaza 3-0740-1 2-3

DETECTIVE COMICS
INCORPORATED

Publishers of
ACTION COMICS
DETECTIVE COMICS
ADVENTURE COMICS
MORE FUN COMICS
STAR SPANGLED COMICS
THE BATMAN

480 LEXINGTON AVE.
NEW YORK, N. Y.

6/25/43

Dear Gardner,

Herewith is check for second chapter of Leading opus.

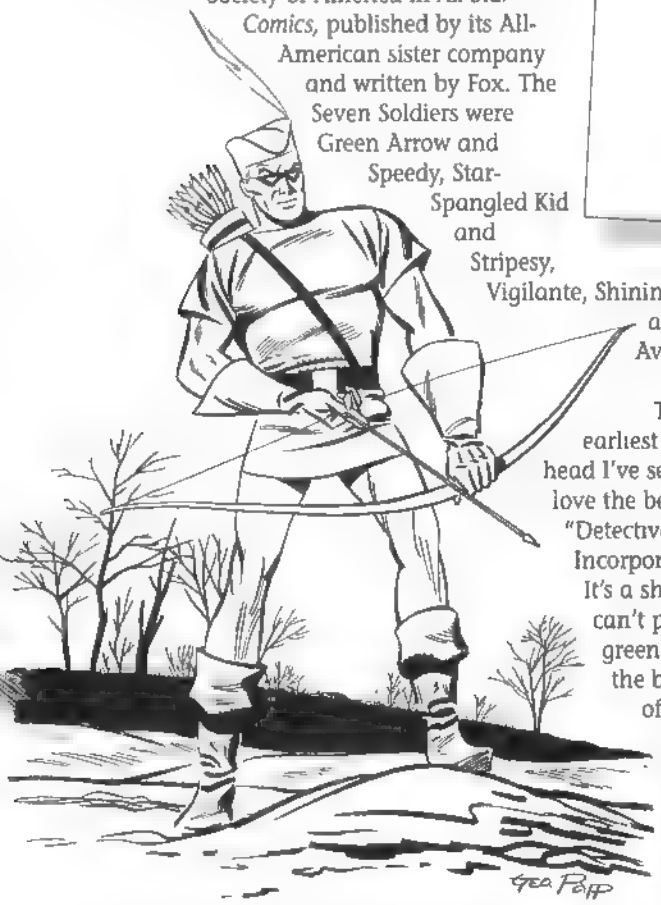
I think the idea for the Green Arrow episode ought to work out all right with a logical explanation introduced. The difficulty here, of course, is that G.A. and Speedy also see the genie. Well, you can use a little pseudo-science to take care of this. The prof knows plenty about chemicals, especially thermite. Yes sir, he can do wonders with thermite, even to making a figure like the genie out of it, with powers of motion, etc. But it's not really he who's responsible -- it's his subconscious self, influenced by the magic formulas in that book, etc.

What I'd like you to keep in mind in doing this Leading is the main theme (the fantasy motive set down in Chapter One). The other chapters should be in tune with that, and it should be clear to the reader that just these stories are selected for the telling because of the fantasy of the florist. I think, too, that the reader should be reminded now and then of where the seven soldiers and the kids are (in the mine -- and still bound, etc.) You've done it at the end of each of the first two chapters as to locale, but not as to the feelings of the kids. A little tension needed. And some mention of the villain where it will fit in, so the reader won't forget his existence.

And try to work out some pages with only six panels instead of seven -- it makes for good pictures.

Regards . . .

This is the earliest DC letterhead I've seen, and I love the beautiful "Detective Comics Incorporated" logo It's a shame we can't print the green aura around the black letters of the logo—or reprint the entire letter on paper of the same shade of yellow as the original.



An early, unpublished 1940s display drawing by Green Arrow artist George Papp [Courtesy of Tom Horvitz] ©1998 DC Comics

EDITOR'S NOTE: *According to Jerry Bails' copious records, Bernie Breslauer, who died in 1950, was an editor at DC from 1942-48, after writing for Standard's pulp magazines circa 1939-40. At DC he also wrote stories for* All-Funny Comics.

A final point: Though Gardner Fox was clearly writing a script for Leading Comics *at the time of Breslauer's letter, neither that story, nor any other Seven Soldiers of Victory tale by Fox, ever saw print in the first fourteen issues. With #15 (Summer 1945),* Leading's *format was drastically changed: the super-hero team was replaced by funny-animal stories, and Fox's Seven Soldiers adventure joined his four unpublished JSA epics in some comic book limbo, probably forever. —***R.T.**

*[***MICHAEL T. GILBERT** *is, among his other accomplishments, the writer/artist/creator of critically acclaimed comics featuring Mr. Monster. He plans several more articles for A/E based on the papers of Gardner F. Fox. Meanwhile, on behalf of the University of Oregon, he is still looking for an extant letters written to or by Gardner Fox, particularly those related to his writing career. Copies of such letters—not necessarily the originals—may be sent to* Alter Ego, *and we'll forward them to Michael.]*

Okay, Axis, Here We Come—Again!

THE RETRO-BIRTH OF THE INVADERS

by Roy Thomas

I'll admit it: I never enjoyed writing *The Avengers* or *Fantastic Four* or even *Conan the Barbarian* any more than I did a little 1970s labor of love I christened—*The Invaders.*

Contrary to what some folks believe, I'm not really obsessed with the Second World War, with or without guys in long underwear running around in the middle of it.

Of course, as a kid in the late 40s I used to run across an occasional wartime issue of *All-Star, Superman,* or whatever. The War was still a common topic of movies, radio, or just plain conversation. One of my ex-army uncles gave me a disarmed hand grenade I tossed around for years.

In the mid-'60s I loved it when Stan Lee and Jack Kirby retold a few Simon and Kirby tales from the 1941 *Captain America* in *Tales of Suspense*—and in late '65 *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos* became my first regular gig; I especially relished writing one issue in which German jet fighters were being produced at an underground factory to turn the tide of the War.

Still, in the late '60s, the Pearl Harbor movie "Tora, Tora, Tora" opened near my Manhattan digs—and I never got around to walking the two blocks to see it before it went off. Some "obsession"!

Inspired by the cover of All-Winners *#4, Frank Robbins' dynamic pencils were inked by John Romita, Sr. for* Giant-Size Invaders *#1—though the left-hand corner had to be altered on the printed version. [From the collection of R.T.] ©1998 Marvel Entertainment.*

Then, in *Avengers* #71 (Dec. 1969), I devised a "cosmic chess game" between Kang the Conqueror and a villain I called the Grand-Master. The two were fighting by proxy, with Kang puppeteering the super-heroes.

As the Grand-Master's pawns in #69-70 I introduced the Squadron Sinister (evil forerunner of the Squadron Supreme, which I created in 1971), even designing their costumes. Since Hyperion, Nighthawk, Dr. Spectrum, and the Whizzer were obvious homages/parodies of Superman, Batman, Green Lantern, and Flash, the Grand-Master's second proxy team needed to be equally formidable. A malevolent version of the Justice League was not an easy act to follow!

On a whim, I pitted the Avengers against Timely/Marvel's Big Three of the WWII years—Captain America, the Human Torch, and Sub-Mariner. I even set the free-for-all in the Nazi-occupied Paris of 1941, dragging Cap's original shield out of mothballs for the first time since *Cap* #1, and putting Subby in the lacklustre black swimtrunks he'd worn for his entire 1940s run.

As an equivalent of "Avengers Assemble!" I proudly gave the Golden Age trio their own battle cry: "Okay, Axis—here we come!" from a Timely house ad—or, more directly, from the title of a 1961 article by journalist Don Thompson in the fanzine *Xero*'s "All in Color for a Dime" series.

What I was really doing, of course, was writing a story at last to go with all those wonderfully chaotic Alex Schomburg wartime covers for *Marvel Mystery* and *All-Winners* and *All-Select.* After all, Cap, Namor, and the Torch had never all appeared together in an actual story until 1946-47's two wonderful but largely unnoticed post-War tales of the All-Winners Squad (which I don't even recall seeing as a kid)!

But, though *Avengers* #71 (ably penciled by Sal Buscema) was well-received, I didn't bring the trio back for nearly two years, until the Kree-Skrull War, and then only in passing and in conjunction with other Timely heroes.

Then, around Labor Day 1974, after two years as Marvel's editor-in-chief, I stepped down, half intending to seek my future fortunes at DC or elsewhere. However, when Stan (since '72 Marvel's publisher) offered me a contract as editor of all comics I scripted, responsible only to himself, I accepted.

At that point I realized I'd need at least one more regular assignment besides the growing volume of Conan work to replace my edito-

rial salary; but I didn't want to go back to any of the mainstream titles. So I decided to push the envelope a bit and see if I could get Marvel to publish a concept which had been brewing in my mind for a while

A concept involving the super-heroes of World War Two.

Timely/Marvel's first three super-stars, in battle against the Nazis and Imperial Japanese which they seemed to have been created to combat (Cap, in fact, literally *was!*)—with Axis super-villains tossed into the mix.

To me, it was a natural.

But how to sell Stan on the idea?

Our fearless leader, despite the aforementioned Captain America series, was hardly pre-sold on super-hero tales set during a war that had ended three decades before. I wanted a clincher—and I found it.

A few years earlier, not long after the TV series "The Invaders" had briefly graced the tube, with Roy Thinnes playing a reverse "Fugitive" who ran around exposing alien spies, Stan had toyed briefly with teaming the Hulk and the Sub-Mariner, then dividing the pages of *Tales To Astonish* between them, into an ongoing full-book team—called *The Invaders.*

He'd soon dropped the notion, and Ol' Greenskin in particular had gone on to ever-greater solo stardom. But Stan sure had liked that Invaders name, I now recalled. (He would *never* have let me use the corny name "The All-Winners Squad," derived simply from the name of a comic—and doubtless wisely so.)

So now, pitching the idea of a new mag set during World War the Deuce, I emphasized that not only would it exploit the popular Captain America and Sub-Mariner and develop the original Human Torch, but I even had the perfect title:

The Invaders!

Ta-DAAA!

Stan liked my idea—and *loved* the name.

I'd managed to come up with a concept that pleased both my publisher/mentor and myself, and all was right with the world.

I'm not certain how Frank Robbins, renowned artist of the comic strip "Johnny Hazard" and recent Batman tales, became *Invaders* penciler. But he did, and I was enthusiastic about working with a talent influenced by my favorite adventure-strip artist, Milt ("Terry and the Pirates"/"Steve Canyon") Caniff. Frank knew WWII backward and forward, and would add countless authentic details of the kind I relished.

Still, since I had doubts about the commercial viability of certain aspects of Frank's work, especially a tendency for his action figures to look a bit "rubbery," I assigned Vince Colletta (lately of *Thor*) to ink the book. From a sales viewpoint, it turned out to be a powerful pairing: *The Invaders* was to prove a good seller as long as Vinnie inked it, and would drop in sales as soon as he left and inker Frank Springer made the artwork look more like Robbins' pencils. Go figure.

The first *Invaders* cover, which I decided should feature a gargantuan Cap, Torch, Subby, and their boy sidekicks Bucky and Toro stomping toward Hitler's "Fortress Europa" (Occupied Europe), was also a natural—for two reasons:

First, it was inspired by the striking cover of *All-Winners* #4 (1942), in which towering figures of the same five, plus the Destroyer and the Whizzer, stalked toward a giant curved landscape labeled "WAR."

Second, Stan had decided this new mag would be a 48-page bimonthly (*á la* our several quarterlies) titled *Giant-Size Invaders.* It amused me that, at least on this first cover, the word "giant-size" could be taken quite literally!

Art director John Romita, another fan of both Caniff and Robbins, volunteered to ink the cover. Like Vinnie inside, he provided that extra something which brought Frank's drawings a bit more in line with the kind of figure work Marvel's readers expected.

Jack Kirby soon became the regular Invaders *cover artist, as on this one spotlighting Union Jack. [From the collection of R.T.] ©1998 Marvel Entertainment.*

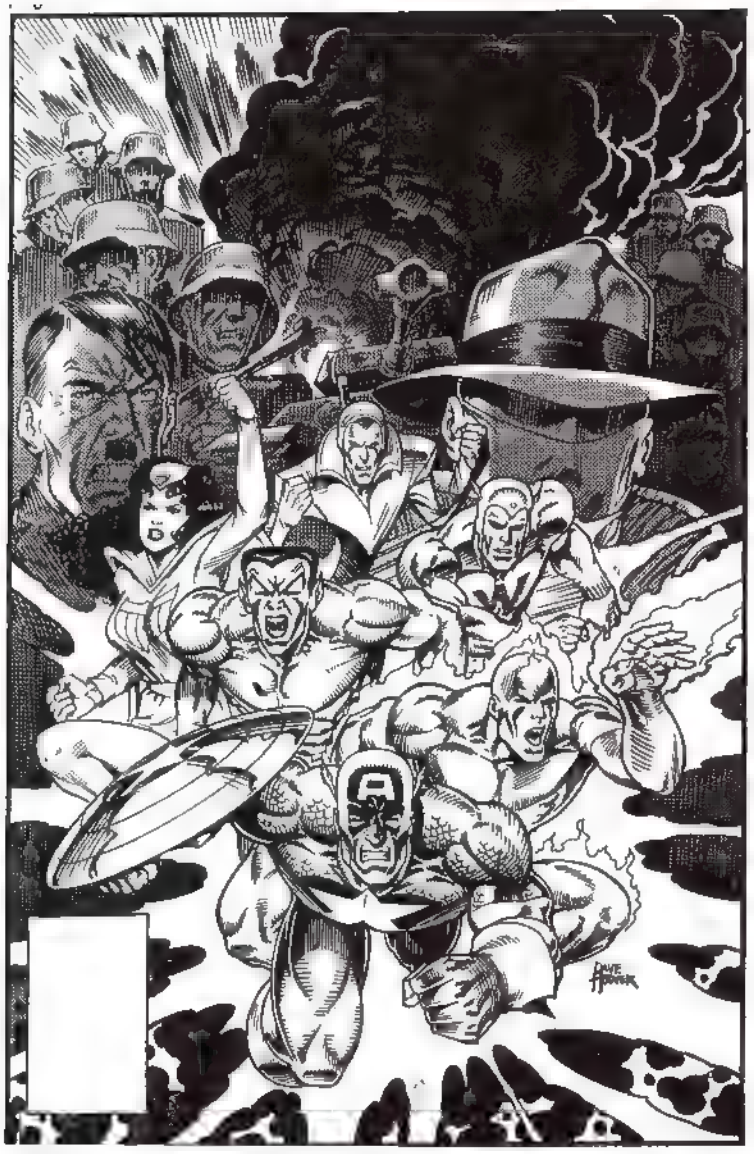
Because Frank's pencils were sometimes a bit loose, however, John misinterpreted one detail: Near the bottom left, he inked the walls of "Fortress Europa" (and its up-jutting castle merlons) as just a pile of squarish rocks. When I pointed this out, John quickly fixed up things on a photostat.

One other stumbling point: At my request, Robbins had drawn Cap's left foot about to come down hard on a Nazi swastika, so the bottom of his boot was prominently shown. To Stan, the soles of footwear were decidedly unglamorous, and he always hated it when they were depicted on heroes, especially the ultra-glamorous Cap. (When a rejected *Captain America* cover was printed in *The Jack Kirby Collector* #18, P. 7, I immediately wondered if one reason Stan might have elected not to use it was that it showed the bottom of both Cap's boots!)

I persevered with the argument that Cap's boot about to stomp on a swastika was an important symbolic element of the cover, and Stan let me win that one—probably because to have tried to change the angle of the foot at that stage would have made Cap look as if he were tiptoeing!

Giant-Size Invaders #1 sold well, but even before it went on sale there was a change in policy, and future issues would immediately shrink to 32 pages. Though I'd enjoyed filling out *GSI* #1 with a Bill Everett tale from 1941's *Sub-Mariner* #1, I didn't mind shifting gears, particularly since that meant that the second *Invaders* issue would likewise be a #1!

To me, despite the actual grimness of World War Two and the ugly things it exposed about the human psyche, *The Invaders* was, from first to last, a tremendous amount of fun to write. In fact, when one DC scripter wrote disparagingly somewhere around that time that most Marvel Comics were nothing but "twenty pages of fun, fun,



Dramatic but unused cover by Dave Hoover for the 1993 Invaders *mini-series, featuring the Third Reich's mustachioed #1 poster boy. ©1998 Marvel Entertainment*

fun," I picked up that phrase and ran it proudly in the credits of *Invaders* #1. Like, to me, fun was the *point* of it all!

Before long, with Jack Kirby's return to Marvel, I was able to get Captain America's co-creator (and the second-best illustrator of Prince Namor) to pencil a number of *Invaders* covers. When I sketched out a new British hero I called Union Jack, I liked the way Frank Robbins interpreted my living-flag design—even more so Jack's sterling cover for *Invaders* #8, the original of which he generously gave me.

In retrospect, my main regret with regard to *The Invaders* is that, because I moved to Los Angeles in '76 and got caught up in a new lifestyle, as editor I wound up farming out the writing of some later stories. Not that my friend Don Glut didn't do a good job, but I should have scripted the whole series myself, from first to last.

My favorite moments in *The Invaders*? There are a lot to choose from, considering there were only slightly more than forty issues (counting *Giant-Size* #1 and a few related issues and annuals):

The origin, in which British Prime Minister Winston Churchill gave the group its name (I was painfully aware that "Invaders" wasn't the ideal name for a bunch of guys who spent more time defending America and Britain than invading Axis countries, so I wanted an illustrious pedigree for the title);

Creating Axis baddies like Master Man, Warrior Woman, Baron Blood, Skyshark, U-Man, and Scarlet Scarab as evil equivalents of the competition's heroes, much as I'd once done with the Squadron Sinister—while developing the Golem as the Jewish/WWII answer to the Hulk, and Iron Cross as the Nazi Iron Man;

The concept of the Liberty Legion, utilizing minor Timely superheroes (the name, which I'd used on a comic I drew when I was 12 or so, had been my first choice after "All-Winners Squad" for the name of the Cap/Torch/Namor mag, but I figured Stan would never go for it—too "DC-ish");

The co-creation with Frank Robbins of Union Jack and Spitfire, whatever travesties have been visited upon them since;

Fantastic Four Annual #11, in which the Invaders guest-starred, with powerful penciling by John Buscema;

The debut of the Crusaders, utilizing long-dead comics-hero names like Captain Wings, the Spirit of '76, Dyna-Mite, *et al.*, for yet another grouping of stalwarts;

Invaders Annual #1, wherein I got Golden Age artists Alex Schomburg, Don Rico, and Lee Elias to return, albeit briefly, to heroes they'd drawn in the 1940s (and which I crafted to dovetail with that earlier scene in *Avengers* #71!);

Doing a story with a character named after my fan-artist friend Biljo White;

Creating a triple-personality villain called Agent Axis—part German Nazi, part Italian Fascist, part Imperial Japanese—with the name of an old DC *Boy Commandos* foe (whom Jack and Stan had once accidentally referred to in a Cap story, misremembering him as a Timely/Marvel character!);

Bringing Thor into the fray—on Hitler's side, at that—for an issue or two;

Dealing with the disgrace of our nation's Japanese-American internment centers, and with the gruesome specter of wartime prejudice;

The related *What If* #4, in which I violated the rules of that title I'd created in order to show how the Invaders became the All-Winners Squad after World War II (I blamed it all on my fellow Missourian, President Truman).

Alas, all good things must come to an end (though I've never understood quite why), and by the end of 1979 *The Invaders* was no more, although in 1993 I got to write a four-issue *Invaders* series with artist Dave Hoover which re-introduced the Golden Age Vision, Silver Scorpion, and Blazing Skull—and made retroactive villains out of wartime non-Timely heroes like Strongman (the Perfect Human), Volton, the Human Meteor, *et al.*, from long-defunct comics companies. (Forgive me, guys—it was all in a spirit of fun, fun, fun.)

Ever since, I've lobbied for a chance to continue the Invaders' exploits past the point at which that series left off.

Moreover, I'll freely admit I've cajoled various Marvel editors over the past half-decade to let me script a new *Invaders* series which commences soon after the 1993 one ended (in mid-1942) and quickly veers off into an "Alternate World War Two"—in which the Nazis and Japanese begin to win the War, and everything the reader thinks he knows about 1942-plus history is subject to startling change.

I planned to start by killing off both Captain America and President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the very first issue—figuring that everybody in our audience would have heard of at least *one* of that pair. The series' tagline was to be: *"World War Two! You only* think *you know who won!"*

Still, whether that dream-series of mine ever happens or not, I know who won the battle to be the first to have "fun, fun, fun" writing new WWII stories about Golden Age super-hero groups at *both* Marvel and DC.

Between *The Invaders* and the early-80s *All-Star Squadron*, I'm proud to say it was your humble servant.

Conan? The Avengers? The Fantastic Four? I loved (and still do) each and every one of them.

But—*The Invaders?*

They were *the originals!*

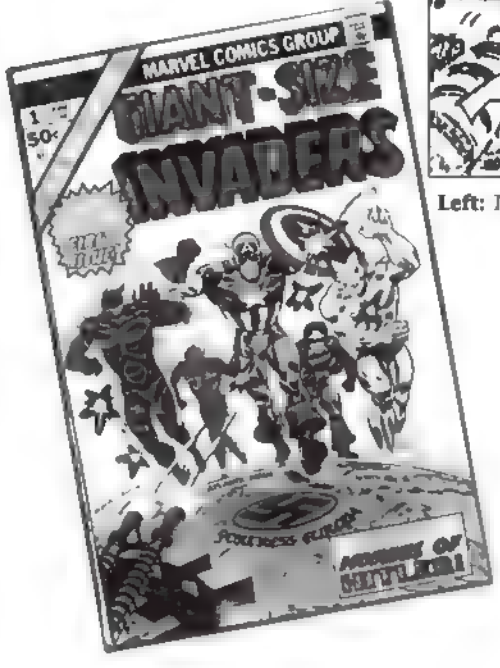
"Okay, Axis, Here We Come—Again!"

The Art of The Invaders

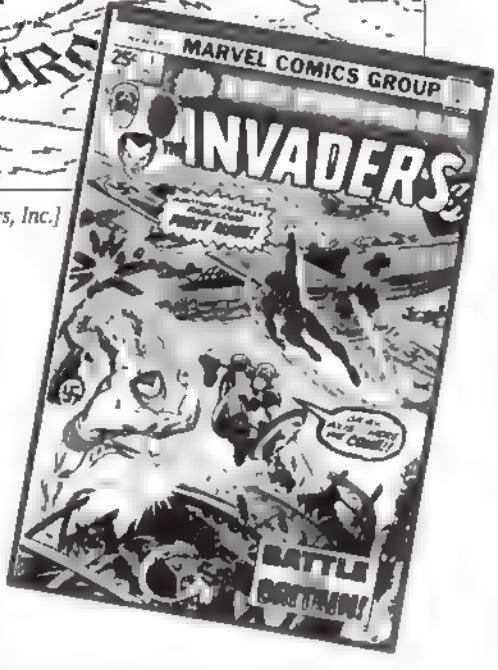
In its two incarnations—from 1975-79 and for four issues in 1993—*The Invaders* was blessed by a succession of talented artists, commencing with Frank Robbins, soon some covers by Jack Kirby, and with '90s artwork by new talent Dave Hoover. At right and on the following page are the penciled versions of the 1970s covers depicted on the preceding pages:

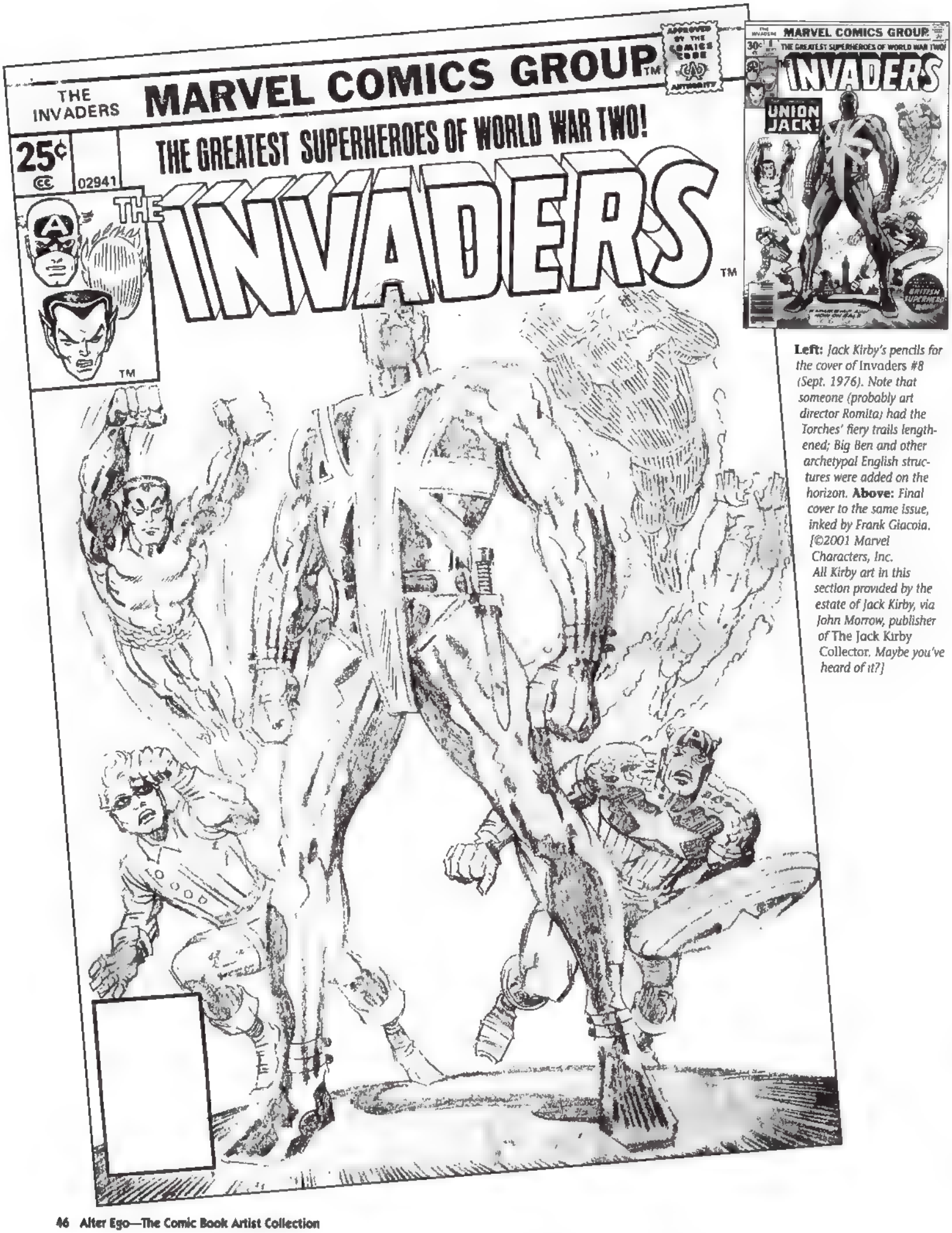
Right: *Frank Robbins' penciled cover for* Giant-Size Invaders *#1 (June 1975). See how easy it was for inker John Romita to misinterpret those castle merlons as just a pile of rocks? A letterer later re-added the landscape notations. Courtesy of David G "Hambone" Hamilton, and of David Anthony Kraft's* Comics Interview Super Special: Masters of Marvel, *1989 [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]*

Left: *The published cover by Robbins and Romita. [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]*



Right: *John Romita, a favorite Captain America delineator of Ye Editor's since 1953, drew the cover of the downsized* Invaders *#1 two months later. [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]*



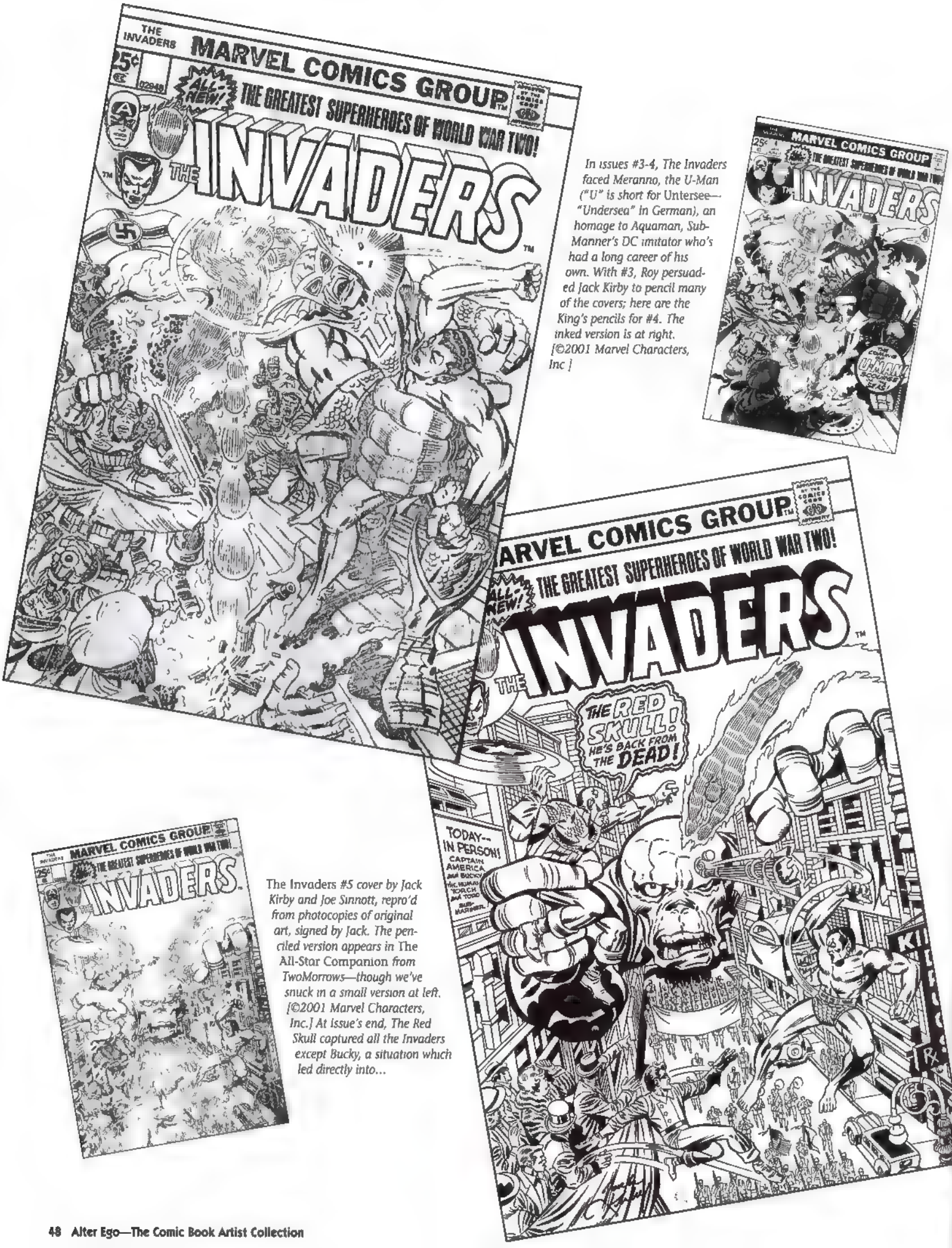


Left: *Jack Kirby's pencils for the cover of* Invaders *#8 (Sept. 1976). Note that someone (probably art director Romita) had the Torches' fiery trails lengthened; Big Ben and other archetypal English structures were added on the horizon.* **Above:** *Final cover to the same issue, inked by Frank Giacoia.* [*©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc. All Kirby art in this section provided by the estate of Jack Kirby, via John Morrow, publisher of* The Jack Kirby Collector. *Maybe you've heard of it?*]

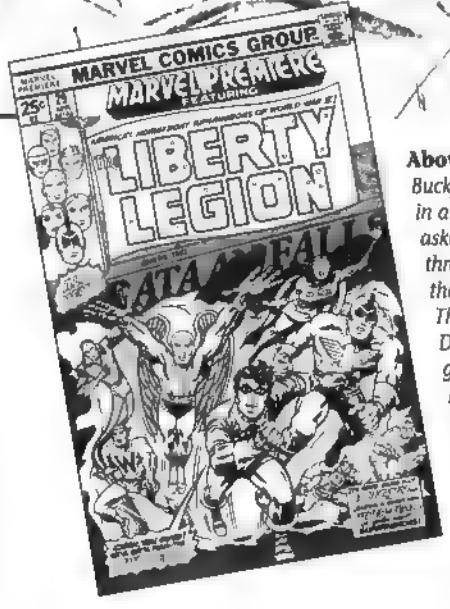
INVADERS
YEAH!
WOK!
...WE RETURN YOU NOW TO OUR FEATURE ATTRACTION:
YOU WON'T GIVE UP WILL YOU, CAP?
BOFO!
WELL I'LL MAKE THIS AS GENTLE AS I CAN--!
YOU'RE ALL HEART, WATER-RAT...
AND, WITH THAT BIT OF DEATHLESS DIALOGUE RINGING IN OUR SHELL-LIKE EARS...
SO I WON'T EVEN MELT DOWN THIS FLYING FLIVVER OF YOURS--
...JUST SURROUND IT WITH A RING OF FIRE!
BLAST YOU!
I'LL HAVE YOUR OVER-HEATED HIDE FOR THAT!
COULD BE, PAL...
BUT AS LONG AS I'M STILL RAMMING ON--
...ANY ROUNDHOUSE IS GONNA HURT YOU A LOT MORE THAN ME!
UH OH! DIDN'T SEE THOSE DARK CLOUDS BEFORE. IT'S RAINING!
FLAMES--ALREADY GETTING WEAKER.
GOT TO STRIKE NOW--
--WHILE THE IRON'S STILL RELATIVELY HOT!
NICE TRY, TORCH--
THOK!
CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE!
27

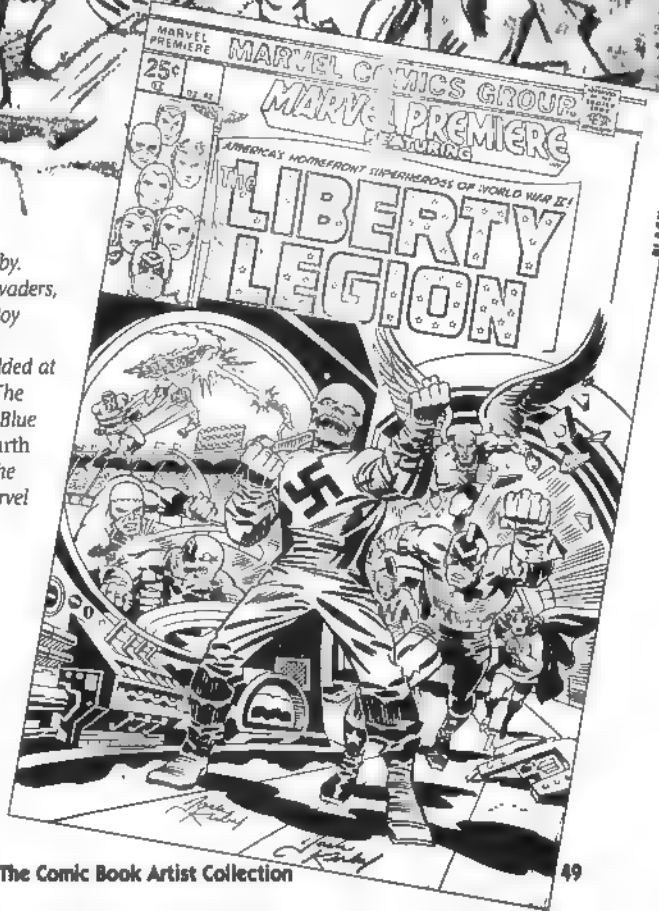
It can't be a Marvel mag without a slugfest between heroes—but the original Torch and Namor were at it two decades before Johnny Storm and The Thing tag-teamed them in Fantastic Four. In the '70s, even Cap, Bucky, and Toro got into the act! Page 27 from The Invaders #3, penciled by Frank Robbins, inked by Vince Colletta. Repro'd from photocopies of the original art, courtesy of Al Bigley, creator of the recent Image comic Geminar [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

In issues #3-4, The Invaders faced Meranno, the U-Man ("U" is short for Untersee—"Undersea" in German), an homage to Aquaman, Sub-Mariner's DC imitator who's had a long career of his own. With #3, Roy persuaded Jack Kirby to pencil many of the covers; here are the King's pencils for #4. The inked version is at right. [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]



The Invaders #5 cover by Jack Kirby and Joe Sinnott, repro'd from photocopies of original art, signed by Jack. The penciled version appears in The All-Star Companion *from TwoMorrows—though we've snuck in a small version at left. [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.] At issue's end, The Red Skull captured all the Invaders except Bucky, a situation which led directly into...*





Above: Marvel Premiere *#29 (April 1976) cover pencils by Kirby. Bucky leads seven 1940s Timely heroes to rescue the hostage Invaders, in a storyline running across* Invaders *#5-6 and MP #29-30. Roy asked Jack to design this cover so the good guys were bursting through a giant 1942 newspaper headline, which was later added at the Marvel offices Clockwise from bottom left: The Whizzer, The Thin Man, Red Raven, Miss America, The Patriot, Jack Frost, Blue Diamond. As detailed in A/E V3#5, this was actually the fourth group which Roy, since the age of twelve, had christened "The Liberty Legion." If at first you don't succeed. ' [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc]*

Left: *The printed cover; inks by Frank Giacoia. Note the altered Thin Man figure. [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]*

Right: *The cover of* Marvel Premiere *#30 (June 1976,, by Kirby and Giacoia, repro'd from photocopies of the original art The Invaders vs. The Liberty Legion vs. The Red Skull! [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc]*

Left: *Dave Hoover's dynamic pencils for the unused 1993* Invaders *cover printed a few pages back. Thanks, Dave! Note the gun, swastika, and concentration camp scene which were omitted in the inking. [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]*

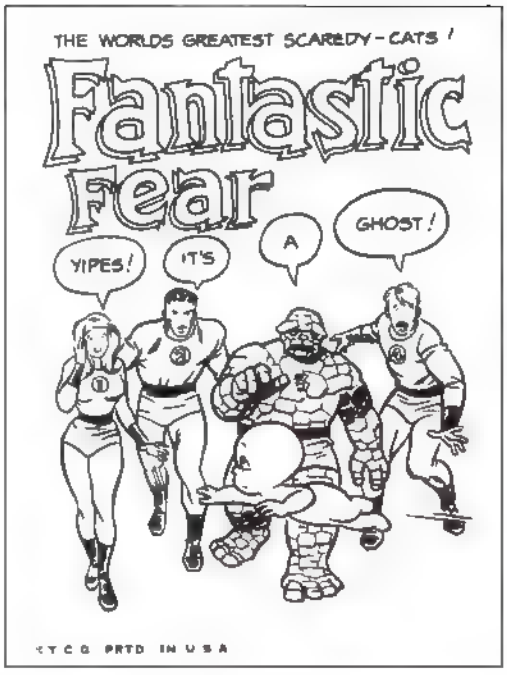
Below: *Dave Hoover's cover rough for* The Invaders *(second series) #4 (Aug. 1993), supplied by the artist. [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]*

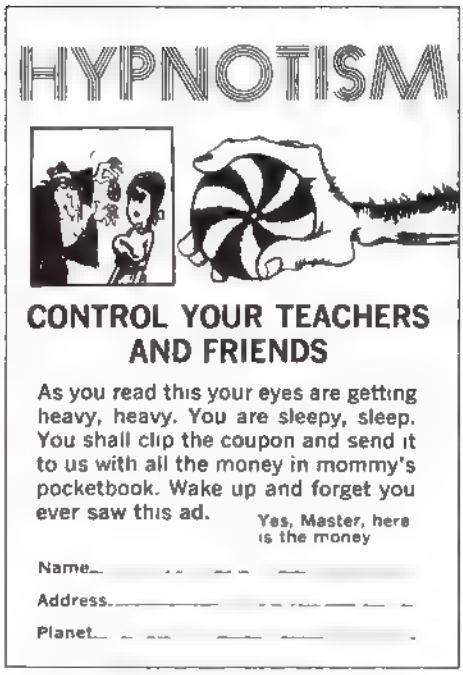
Left: *The printed cover of* The Invaders *(second series) #4. [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]*

The Topps Marvel Parodies

A/E Vol 2 #1 detailed how, circa 1967, Topps, purveyor of bubble gum and sports cards to the nation, issued a set of 16 eight-page, eight-"panel" color comics parodying comic books and strips of that period. Two of these rarely seen 2½" x 3½" items were reprinted in the 1997 Hamster A/E volume; five more last issue. Here are four of the five which lampooned the Marvel heroes.

"The Fantastic Fear" Cover concept: Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script: Roy Thomas or Len Brown
Art: Gil Kane and Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman




HYPNOTISM
CONTROL YOUR TEACHERS AND FRIENDS
As you read this your eyes are getting heavy, heavy. You are sleepy, sleep. You shall clip the coupon and send it to us with all the money in mommy's pocketbook. Wake up and forget you ever saw this ad.
Yes, Master, here is the money
Name
Address
Planet

THE FANTASTIC FEAR ARE WALKING, AS USUAL, THROUGH THE STREETS OF THEIR BELOVED NEW YORK CITY....
HEY, THING&AMAJOB, HAVE YOU NOTICED HOW THE CRIME BUSINESS IS SLACKING OFF LATELY?
YEAH! I'M GETTIN' SOFT AND FLABBY FROM DOIN' NOTHING!
AS A MATTER OF FACT, SO HAVE I, FUMIN' SCORCH!
ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT CITY FIRES!
ME TOO, BELOVED HUSBAND!
BUT LOOK, THERE'S A MASKED ROBBER!
2

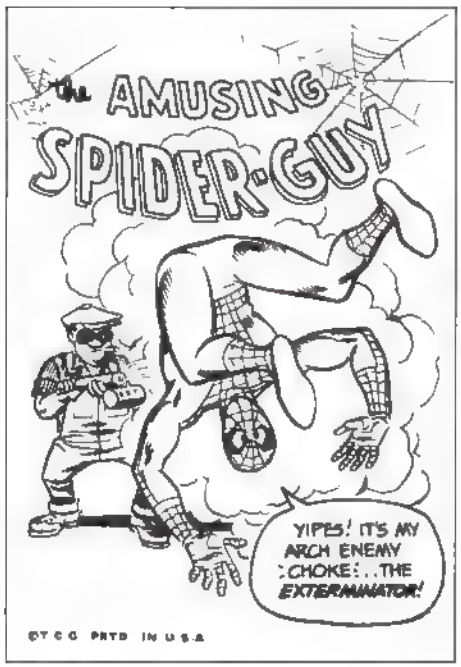
WAS A ROBBER YOU MEAN! THAW'S HAMMER GOT HIM BEFORE I COULD REACH HIM!
HEY... MATCH IT, INVISIBLE PEARL! I STUMBLED OVER YOU AGAIN!
IT'S CLOD-HOPPIN' TIME!
SORRY, DEAR HUBBY!
3

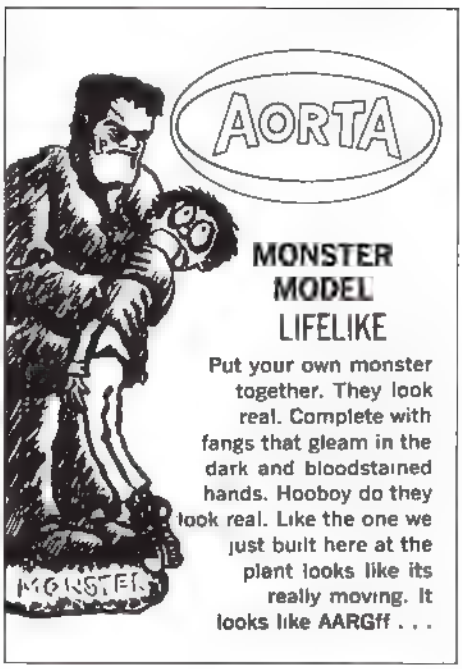
IT'S RIDICULOUS! NO WONDER BUSINESS IS SO BAD! THE SKY'S FULL OF MARVELOUS SUPER-HEROES!
YOU SAID IT, MY DARLING SPOUSE!
YEAH! AFTER ALL, IT WAS US WHO STARTED THE WHOLE THING!
4

HEY! WHILE YOU GUYS ARE CRYING, WOULD YOU MIND TWINING YOURSELF AROUND SOMEBODY ELSE?
IT'S ELASTIC MAN! ARE THE DEE-SEE SUPER-HEROES MOVING TO NEW YORK TOO?
YEEEESH! THAT'S THE LAST STRAW, MR. FEARFUL!
YEAH!
VIC TANNY
5

C'MON, ALL OF YA! WE'RE GONNA DO THE ONLY THING SELF-RESPECTIN' SUPER-HEROES CAN DO WHEN THEY'RE INVADED!
RIGHT! WE'LL SHOW THOSE GUYS JUST WHAT KIND OF HEROES WE ARE!
YEAH!
HMMMS
WE SURE WILL, BETTER HALF!
6

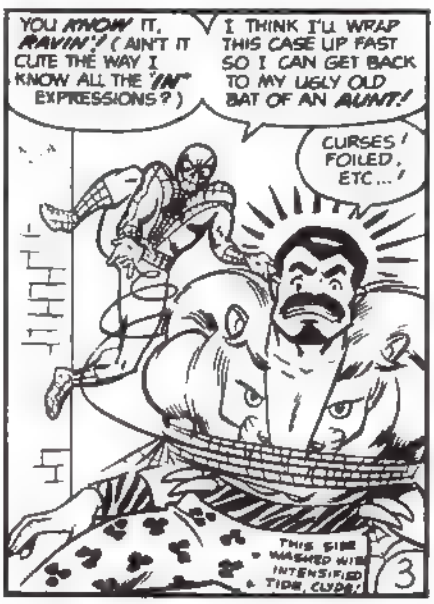
AND SO, HOURS LATER, WE FIND THE FANTASTIC FEAR IN FULL OPERATION... IN A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT LOCALE...
THERE! I GUESS WE SHOWED 'EM!
I GOTTA HAND IT TO YA! THIS IDEA OF MOVIN' TO BERMUDA IS THE BEST ONE YOU EVER HAD!
YEAH! TOO MANY OTHER SUPER-HEROES IN NEW YORK!
THAT'S MY HUBBY!
7




AORTA
MONSTER MODEL LIFELIKE
Put your own monster together. They look real. Complete with fangs that gleam in the dark and bloodstained hands. Hooboy do they look real. Like the one we just built here at the plant looks like its really moving. It looks like AARGff . . .
MONSTER

Cover concept.
Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script: Roy Thomas or Len Brown
Art: Gil Kane and Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman

A TYPICAL EVERDAY ROBBERY BY A SUPER VILLAIN IS TAKING PLACE IN NEW YORK WHEN SUDDENLY...
FAITH AN' BEGGORA! IT'S RAVIN' THE HUNTER!
HAH! NOTHING YOU CAN DO WILL STOP ME COPPER!
WAIT! THAT LIGHT! IT'S THE SIGN OF THE AMUSING SPYDER-GUY!
U.S. MAILS
FANTAS-TIC!

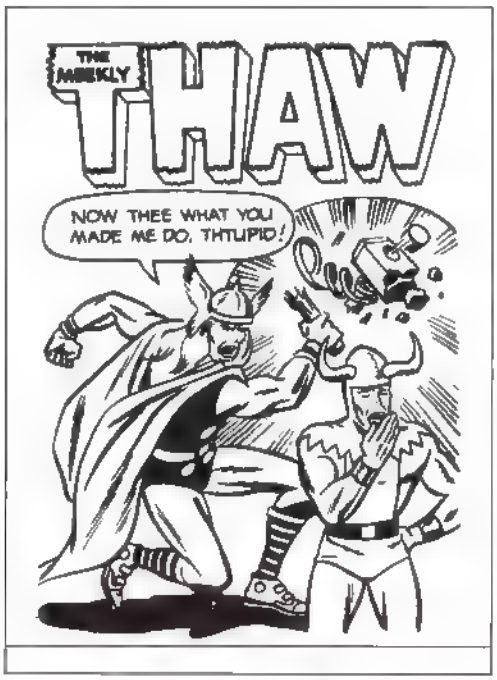

YOU KNOW IT, RAVIN'! (AIN'T IT CUTE THE WAY I KNOW ALL THE "IN" EXPRESSIONS?)
I THINK I'LL WRAP THIS CASE UP FAST SO I CAN GET BACK TO MY UGLY OLD BAT OF AN AUNT!
CURSES! FOILED, ETC...!
THIS SIDE WASHED WITH INTENSIFIED TIDE, CLYDE!
3

THEY SAY SPIDER-GUY IS A TYPICAL TEEN-AGER WHO WAS BITTEN BY A RADIO-ACTIVE SPYDER, THUS BECOMING A SUPER HERO! (WHAT ELSE?)
YOU JUST GONNA STAND THERE, OR YOU GONNA PUT THIS FINK ON ICE? (AIN'T I HIP, FOLKS?)
LOOK HOW HE HAS THE PROPORTIONATE STRENGTH OF A SPYDER!

..HE EVEN CRAWL ON WALLS LIKE A SPIDER!
AIN'T HE AMAZING?
HE SURE IS!
AW, SHUT UP!
HO HUM! SOME OF US GOT IT AND SOME OF US DON'T!
THE DIRTY JOKES HERE

AFTER ALL, THERE'S REALLY NOTHING VERY UNUSUAL ABOUT ME, EXCEPT FOR THIS NUTTY SKINTIGHT UN-COMFORTABLE COSTUME!
OH WELL, IT SURE FEELS GREAT TO BE BACK IN MY TYPICAL TEENAGE ROOM, SO I CAN GET OUT OF THIS RIG!
TYPICAL TEENAGE SECRET CLOSET FOR HIDING COSTUMES FROM PRYING AUNTS
TYPICAL TEENAGE LAMP STOLEN FROM BOBBIN THE BOY BLUNDER!

Cover concept:
Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script: Roy Thomas or Len Brown
Art: Gil Kane and Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman



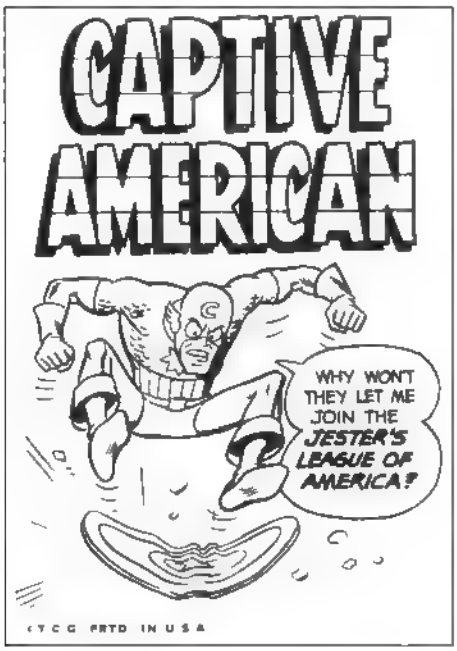
FRONTIER CABIN
$1.00
Get your own authentic looking frontier cabin. Takes only 8 years to assemble. Comes with real logs, real coonskin cap and real hostile Indians.
FRONTIER CABIN
Box 1812, Hoo-Hah, Texas
Name
Frontier Outpost
Planet

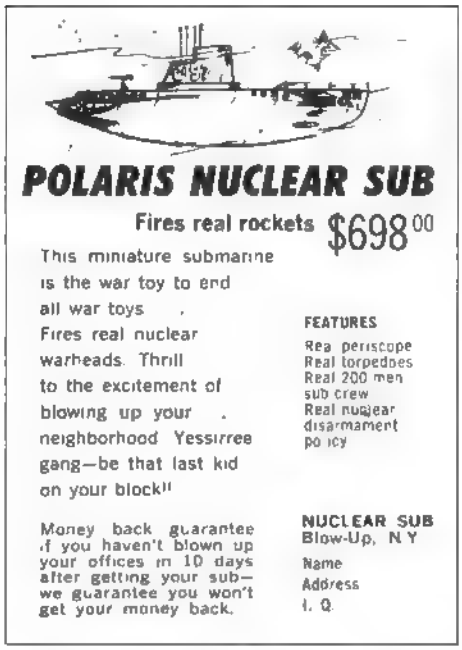
FROM THE HOME OF THE MIGHTY NORSE GODS, THAW, THE GOD OF BLUNDER ...ER.. THUNDER ...HURLS HIS CHALLENGE ...
I, THAW, CAN DEFEAT ANY ONE WHO DARETH TO OPPOTHE ME!
WITH MY MAGICAL HAMMER I CAN DO ANYTHING!
ASGARD
RIGHT GUARD
I CAME I THAW I CONQUERED!
2

THAW! I'M TIRED OF ALL YOUR BOASTING - I'M GOING TO DEFEAT YOU, BUT GOOD!
LOKO, GOD OF MISCHIEF - YOU'RE NOT THRONG ENOUGH TO THOP ME, THTUPID!
MAYBE NOT, BUT MY FRIEND HERE CAN!
CLOUD WITH A SILVER LINING
3

ER - I'LL THLAM MY HAMMER TWITHE, UM - TWO TIMETH! THAT WILL BRING A FEARTHOME ELECTRICAL THTORM!
IF I HAD A HAMMER
HEY - GET OFF MY CLOUD!
5

HUH! ITH NOT WORKING! ITH THTARTING TO THNOW INTHTEAD. HOKAY! I GIVE UP, BUT WHO IS YOUR LITTLE PAL ANYWAY?
WHY - THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON CAN MAKE IT SUNNY WHEN IT SHOULD RAIN AND SNOWY WHEN IT SHOULD THUNDER!
6




POLARIS NUCLEAR SUB
Fires real rockets $698.00
This miniature submarine is the war toy to end all war toys . Fires real nuclear warheads. Thrill to the excitement of blowing up your . neighborhood. Yessirree gang—be that last kid on your block!!
FEATURES
Rea periscope
Real torpedoes
Real 200 men sub crew
Real nuclear disarmament policy
Money back guarantee if you haven't blown up your offices in 10 days after getting your sub—we guarantee you won't get your money back.
NUCLEAR SUB
Blow-Up, N.Y.
Name
Address
I. Q.

Cover concept:
Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script: Roy Thomas or Len Brown
Art: Gil Kane and Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman

IN THESE TROUBLED TIMES, ONE NAME STILL STANDS OUT LIKE A BROADLY BECKONING BEACON TO ALL IN DISTRESS... THE NAME OF CAPTIVE AMERICAN!
I'M CAPTIVE AMERICAN--I STOPPED WORLD WAR II ALL BY MYSELF! I SINGLE-HANDEDLY HALTED ORGANIZED CRIME IN THE U.S.! I PUT THOSE 8 GREAT TOMATOES IN THAT ITTY BITTY CAN!
CAN I HAVE YOUR AUTOGRAPH, CAPTIVE? CAN I, HUH?
HEY, CAPTIVE AMERICAN--WAIT FOR ME!
2

TELL ME, WHY DO YOU WANT THE AUTOGRAPH OF A NORMAL, EVERYDAY, ALL-AMERICAN SUPER-HERO LIKE ME?
I HAVE A BET WITH MY BROTHER! HE SAYS YOU CAN'T EVEN WRITE YOUR NAME!
B-BUT..
FINKY KID!
WAIT YOUR TURN, ADULT CITIZEN!
3

WAIT JUST A FLAG-WAVING MINUTE! I SEE MY OLD FOE THE DREAD SKULL, TRYING TO STEAL THE STATUE OF LIBERTY!
B-B-BUT... THIS MAKES...
ACT FAST, CAP! YOU CAN: (A) PUNCH HIM IN THE MOUTH! (B) KICK HIM IN THE SHINS! (C) RUN!
NO AUTOGRAPH TILL LATER, CITIZEN!
4

HALT, EVIL-DOER! YOU ARE ATTEMPTING TO STEAL SOMETHING WHICH IS DEAR TO THE HEART OF EVERY TRUE AMERICAN! THE STATUE OF LIBERTY
WHO? ME? YOU'RE PULLING MY LEG!
BASE OF STATUE OF LIBERTY (WHAT'D YOU THINK IT WAS, STUPE?)
5

TAKE THAT, YOU NEFARIOUS ENEMY OF TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND MOM'S APPLE PIE!
I--I GIVE UP, CAPTIVE AMERICAN! DON'T HIT ME AGAIN!
U.S. MAILS
GOOD! HERE COMES THAT NICE AUTOGRAPH-HUNTING CITIZEN, WITH A POLICEMAN!
6

YES--BUT NOT FOR THE DREAD SKULL! I'M SERVING YOU A SUBPOENA, FOR CUTTING UP 239 AMERICAN FLAGS TO MAKE THAT CRAZY SUIT!
JUMPIN' GEORGE WASHINGTONS! FOR THIS I CAME BACK AFTER TWENTY YEARS?
BLUE SHIELD
I'VE GOT A NICE SPOT FOR THIS RIGHT NEXT TO MY EGYPTIAN PYRAMID!

GIL AND WALLY TAKE PARODIC POTSHOTS AT THE HULK AND COMIC STRIP KINGPINS OF KING FEATURES! COMING IN ALTER EGO, VOL. 2, #3, ON SALE IN OCTOBER.

Alter Ego V.2, #3 Fall 1998

[This issue's "interior cover" by Sheldon Moldoff appears in color as this volume's back cover.]

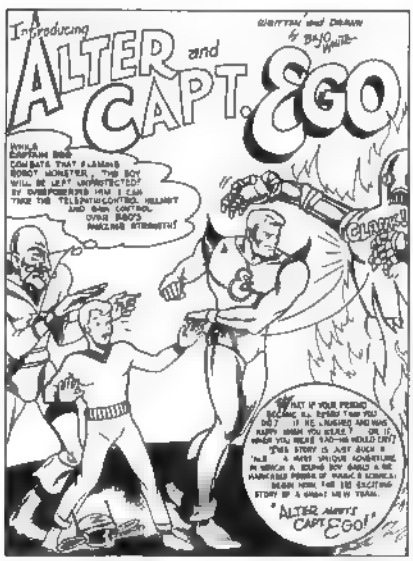
Writer/Editorial

The Altered Ego

PRESENT NG A/E'S NEW MASCOTS!

by Roy Thomas [Abridged]

For *A/E*'s second incarnation, I've decided I'd like to have a *pair* of mascots—*four*, actually using them alternately—because both are closely related to the history of *Alter Ego*.


Introducing
ALTER and CAPT. EGO
WHEN A CAPTAIN EGO COMBATS THAT FLAMING ROBOT MONSTER, THE BOY WILL BE LEFT UNPROTECTED! BY OVERPOWERING HIM I CAN TAKE THE TELEPATH CONTROL HELMET AND GAIN CONTROL OVER BOY'S AMAZING STRENGTH!
CLANG!
"ALTER AWAY'S CAPT EGO!"

Splash page to Biljo White's "Alter and Captain Ego," originally appearing in Alter Ego *Vol. 1, #7. [Reprinted courtesy of Biljo White.]*

1964's *A/E* #7 featured a 7-page comics tale of "Alter and Capt. Ego," a young boy and the powerful spaceman he can both control and help. They were created by Biljo White, whose *Batmania* fanzine is lovingly spotlighted this time around. ("Introducing: Alter and Capt. Ego" was reprinted in the 1997 *Best of Alter Ego* volume and is ©2001 Roy Thomas and Bill Schelly.)

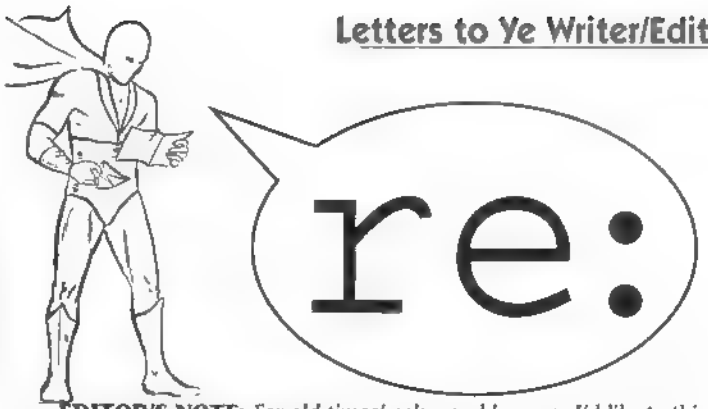
In 1986 I wrote *Alter Ego*, a four-issue comics series for First Comics, co-plotted by my wife Dann. Young Rob Lindsay donned a mask to become a superhero inside a comic book universe. ("Rob Lindsay" had been an occasional early-'60s letters page alias of Jerry Bails, founder of *A/E*.) Artist Ron Harris, with whom I'd worked on *The Young All-Stars* and other DC comics, did several early pencil drawings of a somewhat different version of that Alter Ego, one of which appears at right.

These four *Alter Ego* comics, as well as Roy & Dann Thomas' *Captain Thunder and Blue Bolt*, can be perused at Dennis Mallonee's website <*HeroicPubs@aol.com*>.

Roy

[Art ©1998 Ron Harris. Alter Ego is a trademark of Roy & Dann Thomas.]

Letters to Ye Writer/Editor



EDITOR'S NOTE: *For old times' sake, and because I'd like to think all missives printed in our new letters section will indeed be "with reference to" something, I've kept the name "re:" from* Alter Ego, *Volume 1, #8-9. Also, because Jon B. Cooke and I both liked the abbreviation A/E for this fanzine's name, I've restored that 1960s usage, as well. Now, onward:*

Hi Roy!

Long time no see, or whatever. Having loads of fun reading through *Comic Book Artist/Alter Ego* #2. Reminds me of the days I was a die-hard fan. It brings back some very pleasant memories that you guys were responsible for.

About your point #6 on page 7 concerning what name Stan typed and crossed out before the name "Jack": I believe I have the answer.

Looking closely, the letters seem to me to be "Jackg."

It's my contention that Stan crossed out the "first name" simply because of a typo—having added the "g" after Jack's name.

On another subject: Sometime in the mid-1980s an order came down at Marvel to plug Jim Shooter and *Secret Wars* like they were God's gift to comicdom. This didn't sit well with me, and I discovered something in a conversation with Steve Leialoha, something I believe was accurate. I used this info as a roundabout way of "plugging" *Secret Wars*, as Steve was the book's inker, but really, I just wanted to get Jack's name into a 1980s *F.F.* letters page. I also thought it was time to set the record straight about who actually inked *F.F.* #1.

Steve L. had recently spent some time with Jack and Roz Kirby During the time they were together Roz had apparently challenged Jack himself to name the inker of *F.F.* #1, and even he didn't recall at first. It was Roz who remembered that that groundbreaking cornerstone issue was inked by none other than *Artie Simek*! Apparently, Jack agreed with her once she brought it up.

I just took a very quick look through the first four issues of *F.F.*, and it is my opinion that *Artie Simek* inked *F.F.* #1-2 and that *Sol Brodsky* inked issues #3-4.

Mike Higgins
(via e-mail)

For years, Mike, I too have heard the rumor that Artie Simek, who lettered Fantastic Four *#1-2, also inked those issues. I've always been a bit suspicious of it, because Artie never mentioned it to me in all the years I knew him, nor do I know of his inking anything else at Marvel. However, the late great Artie had been a sports cartoonist at one time, so it's far from impossible. Let's keep digging.*

You're doubtless right about the "Jackg" bit. Other readers, including Nigel Parkinson of Liverpool, England, pointed out the same thing. Can't say I'm too surprised.

(Mike Higgins, besides his work in comics as colorist, etc., has been an editor at Marvel. In fact, he gave me my first work there when I returned in the late 1980s, bless 'im.)

Dear Roy:

Thanks for *Alter Ego*, Volume 2. The Gardner Fox letters are of special interest to me. It's not entirely impossible that a few of my own

continued on page 85

An Insider's Part of Comics History

JACK KIRBY'S SPIDER-MAN

by Steve Ditko

[**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *The following essay by the artist of Captain Atom, Spider-Man, and Dr. Strange in the early-to-mid 1960s, and of many other features since, is copyright ©1990, 1998 by Steve Ditko and is presented here with his kind permission. It first appeared in* Robin Snyder's History of Comics, *Volume 1, No. 5 (May 1990), and has been slightly revised and updated by the author for this publication.]*

In my series of essays, "Avenging the Issues," now in the draft stage, I deal more deeply with the aspects of ideas, creators and creation, definitions and other relevant concepts (collaboration, art ownership, rights and justice), their various contexts (Marvel, Marvel's success, division of labor). It also involves examining numerous confusions, errors, and fallacies.

But with *Robin Snyder's History of Comics,* I have been given an opportunity to briefly deal with some specific issues and problems—Spider-Man's creation and costume—that never should have arisen and are unfortunately almost out of hand. Now, hopefully, they may be put to rest or reduced to more of a non-issue status.

In *Comics Scene* #2, March 1982, page 27, Jack Kirby is quoted as saying: "I did a mess of things. The only book I didn't work on was *Spider-Man,* which Steve Ditko did. But Spider-Man was my creation."

There is an interview with Kirby, by Gary Groth, in *The Comics Journal* #134, February 1990. On page 82 he says: "I created Spider-Man. We decided to give it to Steve Ditko. I drew the first Spider-Man cover. I created the character. I created the costume. I created all those books, but I couldn't do them all. We decided to give the book to Steve Ditko...."

A creation is something created, especially something original· Created by the imagination, invention, or design (noise, junk, graffiti, light bulb, novel, etc.). There is a range/degree of creation, from trivia, the superficial, to the fundamental.

Creator. One who creates.

In 1961 I was working with Stan Lee (writer/editor at Marvel Comics) in producing material (stories and art) for *Amazing Adventures* (which became *Amazing Adult Fantasy*). Briefly, in regards to our working method, Stan provided the plot ideas. There would be a discussion to clear up anything, consider options, and so forth. I would then do the panel/page breakdowns, pencil the visual story continuity, and, on a separate paper, provide a very rough panel dialogue, merely as a guide for Stan. We would go over the penciled story/art pages and I would explain any deviations, changes, and additions, noting anything to be corrected before or during the inking. Stan would provide the finished dialogue for the characters, ideas, consistency, and continuity. Once lettered, I would ink the pages.

The magazine came about because of the five-page twist-ending stories we had done as back-ups in *Strange Tales, Tales To Astonish, Tales of Suspense,* and *Journey into Mystery.*

The typical format for those titles consisted of a 10-12 page lead story about some alien or monster or creature with an odd name (Groo, Grottu, Fin Fang Foom, Kkranga, etc.). Stan was the writer, Kirby the penciler, and Dick Ayers usually did the inking. The back-up features (five-pagers) were drawn by Don Heck, Paul Reinman, and me.

Since those twist-ending stories received favorable mail, it was believed a complete book by us would sell.

Amazing Adult Fantasy was born and reached #14 when Stan said a new Marvel hero would be introduced in #15. He would be called Spider-Man. Jack would do the penciling and I was to ink the character.

In a discussion with me about Spider-Man, Stan said he liked the name Hawkman but DC had the name and character. Marvel would add Ant-Man [and the Wasp] so it would have the insect category. (Technically, a spider is not an insect.) From that, I believed Stan had named the character.

Who first came up with the specific name, Spider-Man, is for Stan and Jack to resolve.

Stan said Spider-Man would be a teenager with a magic ring which could transform him into an adult hero—Spider-Man. I said it sounded like the Fly, which Joe Simon had done for Archie Publications. I didn't believe Jack was involved in that feature because the issues I had seen lacked the usual Kirby flair.

Stan called Jack about it but I don't know what was discussed. I never talked to Jack about Spider-Man, so I don't know what his ideas concerning the characters actually were.

Later, at some point, I was given the job of drawing Spider-Man. Why, exactly? Stan and Jack also have to clear that up.

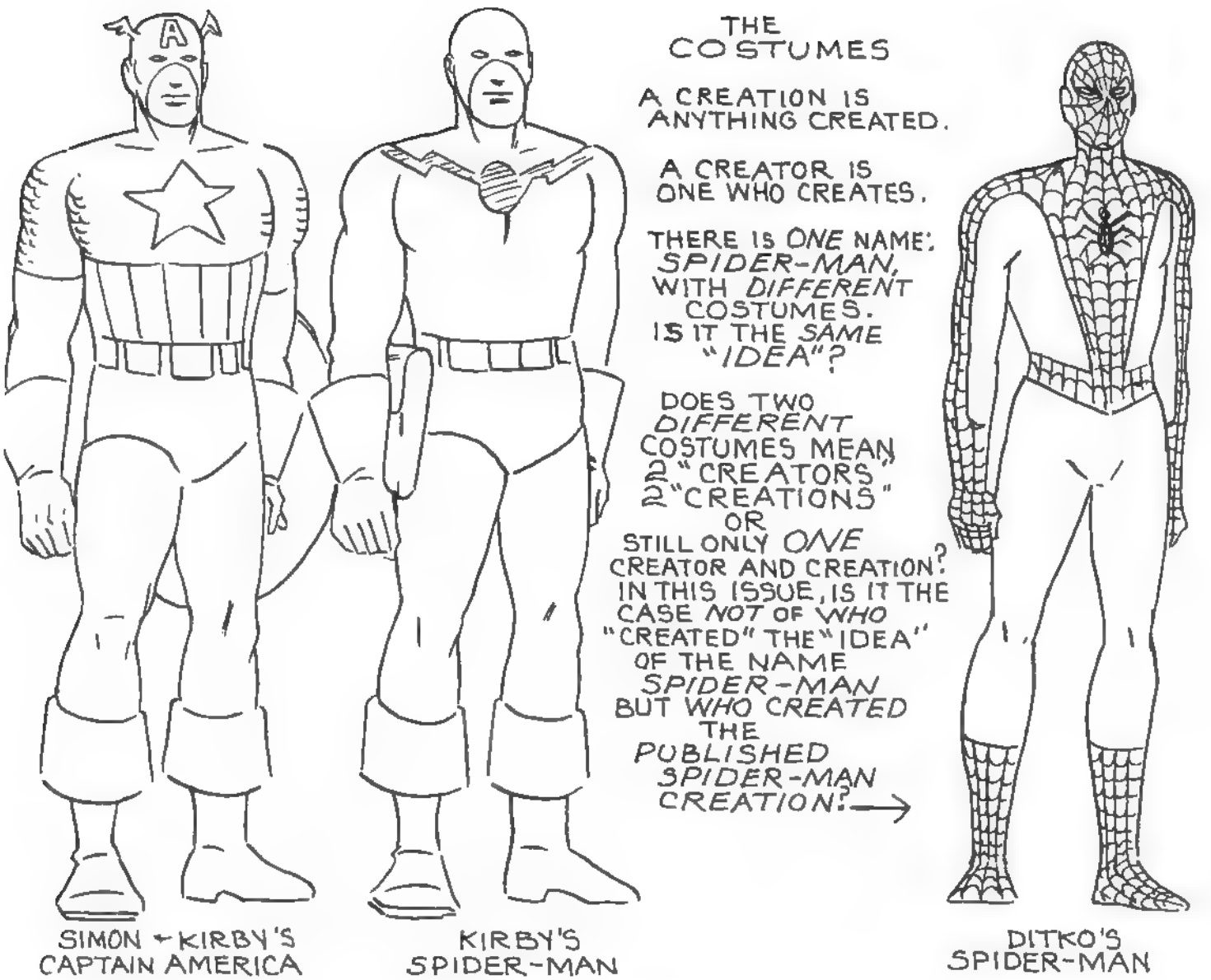
One of the first things I did was to work up a costume. A vital, visual part of the character, I had to know how he looked, to fit in with the powers he had, or could have, the possible gimmicks and how they might be used and shown, before I did any breakdowns For example: A clinging power, so he wouldn't have hard shoes or boots, a hidden wrist-shooter versus a web gun and holster, etc.

The creation of the costume is a story in itself. Some brief points: The obvious one is the use of the spider theme and the webbing design; I wasn't sure Stan would like the idea of covering the character's face but I did it because it hid an obviously boyish face. It would also add mystery to the character and allow the reader/viewer the opportunity to visualize, to "draw," his own preferred expression on Parker's face and, perhaps, become the personality behind the mask. Did it work that way? (There are interesting psychological theories about masks.)

Kirby had penciled five pages of his Spider-Man. How much was pure Kirby, how much Lee, is for them to resolve.

The splash was the only one with a drawing of Spider-Man. A typical Kirby hero/action shot. But the costume is what is important. (See illustration.) I'm uncertain about the abstract chest design. The closest thing to it is the one on Ant-Man. Kirby's Spider-Man had a web gun, never seen in use. The only connection to the spider theme was the name.

The other four pages showed a teenager living with his aunt and uncle. The aunt was a kindly old woman, the uncle was a retired police captain, hard, gruff, the General Thunderbolt Ross


THE COSTUMES
A CREATION IS ANYTHING CREATED.
A CREATOR IS ONE WHO CREATES.
THERE IS ONE NAME: SPIDER-MAN, WITH DIFFERENT COSTUMES. IS IT THE SAME "IDEA"?
DOES TWO DIFFERENT COSTUMES MEAN 2 "CREATORS" 2 "CREATIONS" OR STILL ONLY ONE CREATOR AND CREATION? IN THIS ISSUE, IS IT THE CASE NOT OF WHO "CREATED" THE "IDEA" OF THE NAME SPIDER-MAN BUT WHO CREATED THE PUBLISHED SPIDER-MAN CREATION?
SIMON + KIRBY'S CAPTAIN AMERICA
KIRBY'S SPIDER-MAN
DITKO'S SPIDER-MAN

type (from the Hulk), and he was down on the teenager.

Next door or somewhere in the neighborhood there was a whiskered scientist-type involved in some kind of experiment or project. The end of the five pages depicted the kid going toward the scientist's darkened house.

That is the Spider-Man "given" to me.

That is the total of Kirby's Spider-Man "creation." That is what he "created," brought into existence—five unused penciled pages of an unfinished story. It exists as a part, a fragment, of some undisclosed whole. The story, characters, legend, "ideas," are incomplete, unknown. Jack's whole Spider-Man "idea" is unexplained, nonexisting, uncreated.

Almost all of the bits of this "creation" (the scientist, magic ring, etc.) were discarded/never used. So what is left of the "original creation"? A name, a teenager, an aunt and uncle. Is it to be believed/held that a name or its "idea" could "cause" the originator to "create" a rejected "creation" and "cause" others to "create" a complete, accepted, and successful one? How is that accomplished? The burden of proof rests with the ones who claim it does.

The first complete Spider-Man adventure, containing the legend and story, was published in *Amazing Fantasy* #15, from Stan's synopsis. With this story our working method was obviously more involved than with the five-pagers because the ideas were greater. There were more characters, action, drama, and complexities. There were continuing characters (main and supporting), all with different personality types, on-going relationships, personal problems, and conflicts. The heroes and villains had various motives and powers to be exploited. All needed consistency, yet development and growth had to be considered.

While it is necessary to know who made the major or important contributions to any published story, it is irrelevant in this context.

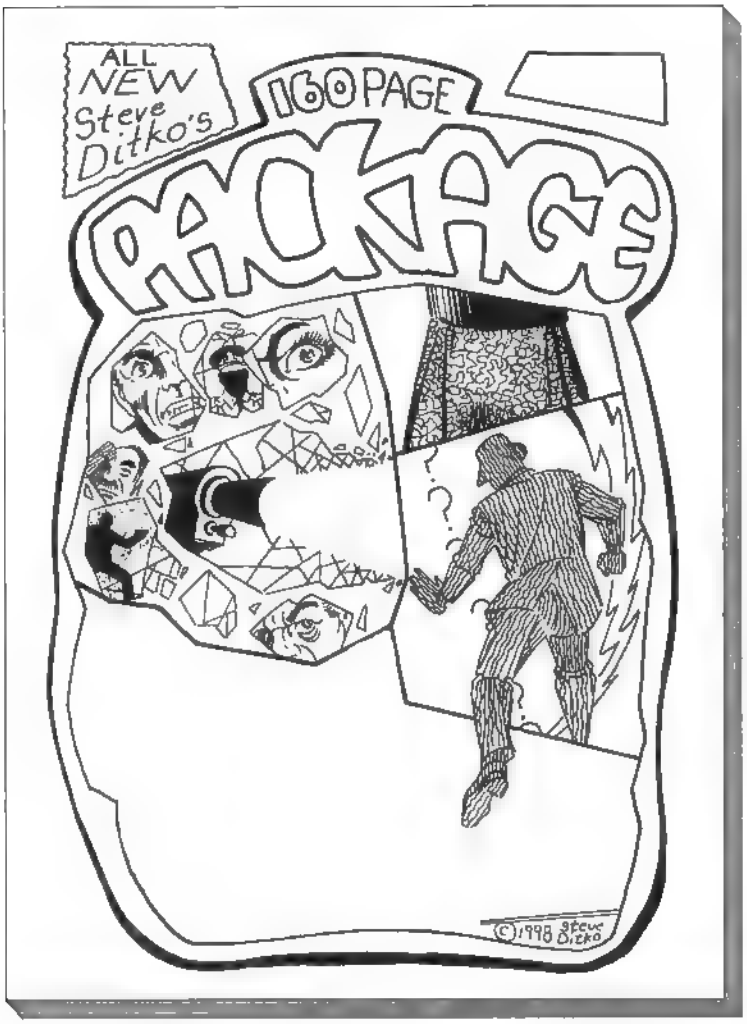
What is relevant can be seen by examining the first Spider-Man story and comparing it with what is known of Jack's Spider-Man.

Surely they are not identical "creations."

Are there no important differences? Only minor, unimportant ones? Are the similarities major or minor? Which essential elements, in both, would make them belong to one "idea," one "creator"?

Or does the comparison reveal enough real differences to conclude that even with the same name they are two different creations with different creators?

What standard could be used in evaluating and judging both versions of one "creation" belonging to one "creator"?



Coming soon from Robin Snyder: Steve Ditko's 160 Page Package. *One big book at only $12. Available from Robin or see the November* Previews. *©1998 Steve Ditko.*

There is a confusion about the "first" Spider-Man cover. I penciled and inked the first cover after I inked the first story, the cover (always) being done last. Which means Spider-Man had a costume, used in the story, the web-designed costume I brought into existence. So I am the creator of it and the published Spider-Man costume is my creation.

I drew the first cover from a subjective viewpoint. I wanted to put the reader/viewer up front with the swinging Spider-Man, to be a part of the activity, to see and realize the danger in falling, in having a sense of swinging along with Spider-Man.

I don't know (or remember) why Stan rejected my cover. He had Jack pencil a second, replacement cover. I don't know whose idea it was for the reader/viewer's viewpoint to be out of the action, one of the crowd, as a spectator watching the hero swinging overhead.

But before Jack was asked to pencil the second, replacement cover, my Spider-Man costume already existed in the first story and on the first cover. So what Spider-Man costume did Jack create?

I inked Jack's cover. This second version became the first published cover. Does that mean Jack's using my costume is equivalent to "creating" my costume "first"? My original first cover has been printed (in *Marvelmania* #2, 1970, and several comics), so it does exist and it did exist, as did my story featuring the costume, before Jack was asked to draw the second cover.

Jack is entitled to credit for what he did on the cover (for whatever he did anywhere and at any time). Am I not also entitled to credit for what I did?

If not, why?

Jack penciled the first published Spider-Man cover. He created a similar scene to mine with a different viewpoint from mine and he also used my created costume in doing so.

Is his cover a "creation"?

Is one person, one "creator," responsible for the main elements in it?

What kind of standard is to be used?

Since penciling a cover is known to come first, to come before the inking of the cover, many, seeing a cover before the first story and art, somehow believe the cover penciler (a position) is therefore the "creator" of what is and what follows, that the following story ideas, storyline, characters, costume, popularity, sales, and success are all also "caused" and "created" by the penciler (position). All are his "creations." He actually brought them into existence.

But how do those believers explain it, prove it, validate it?

There have been earlier uses of the spider "idea" in comics: Paul Gustavson's Alias the Spider, DC's Tarantula with his web gun, and certainly many other heroes, heroines, villains, and villainesses (such as, in this last category, the earlier female Black Widow, before Simon or Kirby or Lee). There was a Spider pulp novel series and a Spider movie serial, all before any Kirby or Lee Spider-Man.

Is the first person who used the spider "idea" or theme in a tale or fable the "cause," the "creator," of all subsequent "creations" involving spiders or the spider "idea" (name) in stories, novels, radio programs, pulps, or comics?

What about the concept of a hero/name, its "idea" or theme? Is every character called/labeled a hero, no matter how different in costume, power, etc., "created" by the first person, the "creator" of, the recorder of, the first hero tale, fable, or legend?

Or can another's work, using a common "idea," theme (hero, spider, etc.) or even the same name, be an original, created work? The other's work can have its own unique identity consisting of specific parts (characters, costume), place (setting), qualities (powers and gimmicks), arrangements and relationships (plot ideas), and meaning (the view of man, life, existence, right and wrong, justice).

Is it then something distinctly new, having enough identifiable measurable difference, regardless of any common base, to stand out on its own as something original, a creation?

Is Jack's Mighty Thor an original, created work by Jack the creator? (He earlier did a story about Thor's hammer for DC.)

If it isn't and he isn't, there will be an infinite regress. Every comic book hero (from Superman to Batman) is the result of some prior "idea" or "ideas," names or words, some prior position or "creator" from some previous position or "creator," ad infinitum. It will mean there are no real, meaningful differences, no originality, no creative differences. Who then, today, has a right to claim "creating" anything or being a "creator"?

If Marvel's Thor is a valid created work by Jack, his creation, then why isn't Spider-Man by Stan and me valid created work, our creation?

Can anyone have it both ways?

A creation is actually a re-creation, a rearrangement of existing materials in a new, different, original, novel way. In comics, the materials are facts, fiction, and fantasy elements

Ten writers could take the same idea and come up with more

than ten different valid creations. Such as in the idea of: Boy meets girl, loses girl, and gets girl back. The same goes for artists.

A valid comic book creation (character, hero, costume, etc.) is that which is actually brought into existence, a finished whole, a complete creation.

The valid sense of a creation is in the form of its published existence. Thomas Edison is rightfully honored for his successful light bulb. His early repeated failures, and those of all the others who tried, experimented, struggled, and failed, are irrelevant. The failures involve neither a valid creator nor any valid creation.

One can't really expect the popular or accepted history of comics to be better, in regards to facts and truth, than the histories of nations, races, religions, ideologies, politics, business, etc. The "truth" about people, their actions, is mostly what one wants to believe and accept or because it opposes someone else's "truth" or it serves some advantage or gain to a self-interest. It is more of an emotionally desired "truth" than a factually proven or reasoned truth.

Maybe it's a paradox.

Continuing issues and problems are creations. They are created, made up, of falsehoods and accepted contradictions. And they have creators

But answers, solutions, are not creations, not created, have no creators, only recognizers, identifiers, and discoverers.

A solution is a discovery of a true identification of relevant facts, a correct relationship among them, with people and activities, in any given event or context, which leads to resolving the contradiction which hinders or ruins a successful understanding or action.

"A truth is the identification of a fact of reality." (Ayn Rand.) A truth is not made up or created. It is discovered. The concepts used (conceptual identity, identification) must correctly correspond to the percepts, the referent, to that which exists or happens—factual material.

A falsehood has to be created, brought into existence, by the misuse of concepts or the denial of facts. Both ways contradict a real something's true identity and identification. It is an attempt to "create," make, the unreal, and have it accepted as "real," to present the false as "true."

Of course, one always has a choice (free will). One can correct any error, mistake, or contradiction at any time or continue the "created" fantasy. But fantasy only works for fictional characters in a fictional world.

For information about Robin Snyder's excellent monthly publication, now entitled The Comics, *and the forthcoming* Steve Ditko's 160-Page Package *(see pg. 6 for a teaser showing part of the "work-in-progress" cover), please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Robin Snyder, 2284 Yew Street Rd., #B6, Bellingham, WA 98226-8899.* Alter Ego *and* Comic Book Artist *highly recommend both.*

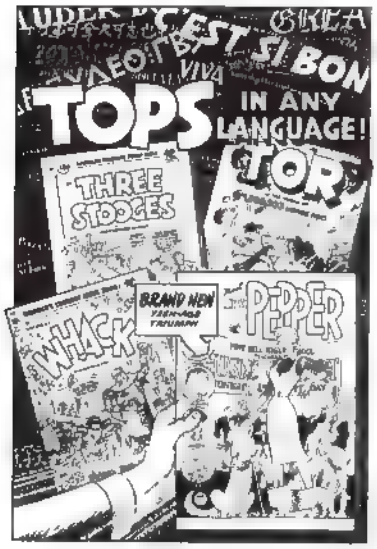
The above first appeared in a salute to Charlton writer Joe Gill in Robin Snyder's History of Comics, *Vol. 3, No. 2, Feb. 1992 Art courtesy of and ©1998 by Steve Ditko. Captain Atom ©2001 DC Comics.*

"Draw for Comic Books! Learn and Earn in Your Spare Time—At Home!!"

WHEN JOE KUBERT AND NORMAN MAURER TAUGHT COMICS DRAWING BY MAIL

Interview conducted by Roy Thomas

*[**A personal note:** In 1953 and 1954, Joe Kubert and Norman Maurer produced a group of excellent comics for the St. John Publishing Company:* The Three Stooges *(with Moe, Larry, and Shemp);* Whack *(one of the better* Mad*-type mags);* Meet Miss Pepper *(à la "Our Miss Brooks"); the wildly successful first 3-D comic, starring Mighty Mouse—and the truly masterful* Tor *(née* 1,000,000 Years Ago*), about a wandering hunter in an anachronistic age of dinosaurs. Also featured in these books was the work of Alex Toth, Russ Heath, Bob Oksner,* et al. *In summer of 1954, these St. John comics suddenly sported full-page ads headed by the quotation that forms the title of this interview; beneath it were panels of Joe and Norm, already familiar faces to us from conversational illustrated interludes in earlier issues. The ads announced their brand new Comic Book Illustrators Instruction Course. Norm Maurer, alas, passed away in the late 1980s; but this month, 44 years after that first correspondence course lesson, Joe Kubert, whose School of Cartoon and Graphic Art has taught a generation of comics artists, is launching a new one: Joe Kubert's World of Cartooning, more on which can be found in its ad in this issue of* Comic Book Artist. *Obtaining a copy of the 1954 Lesson One (and, as it happened, Only) from artist/Kubert fan extraordinaire Al Dellinges, I decided this new correspondence course presented me with a good excuse to cover the earlier one, which very few readers of this magazine can have seen. Joe graciously consented to be interviewed by phone; the interview was transcribed by Jon B. Cooke, and edited by—* **R.T.***]*



1954 house ad touting the St John line of comic books. Art by Norman Maurer.

Roy Thomas: *As a lead-in, Joe: I was going over the inside front cover bios that you and Norman Maurer wrote for #1 of* 1,000,000 Years Ago *[Sept. 1953] which featured a photo of you drawing at a drawing board, Norm standing beside you. It says you had been boyhood friends since the age of 13. By 1953 you were living in New Jersey and were 27 or so?*

Joe Kubert: I moved to New Jersey when I was about 17 or 18. Up to that time I was attending the High School of Music and Art. Before I moved, I commuted from east New York, in Brooklyn, to the High School of Music and Art. Norm lived in the borough of Queens, and the High School is where we got to know one another.

Roy: *By 1953 Norman was living in Los Angeles and you in New Jersey?*

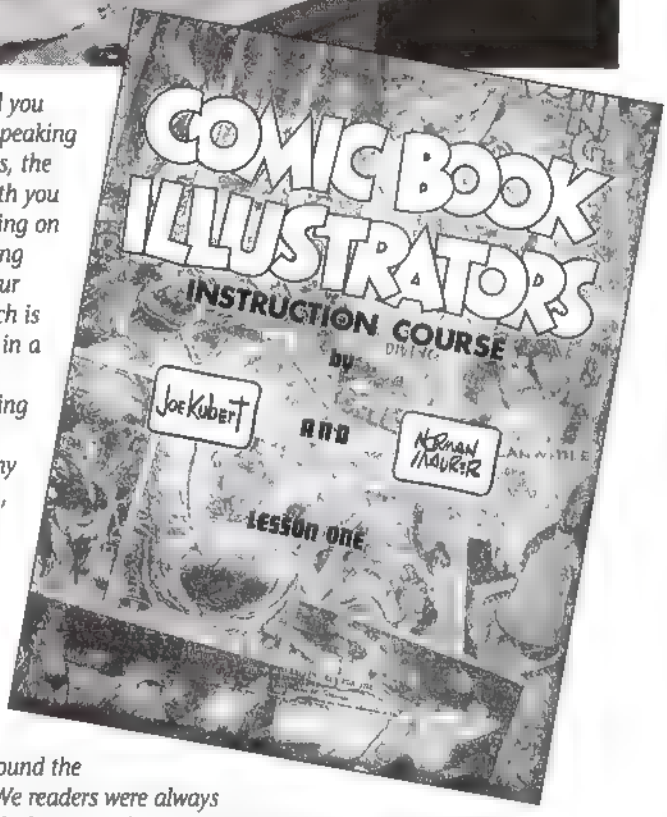
Joe: I got out of the Army in '51 or '52. Prior to going into the Army, I had made arrangements with Archer St. John, of St. John Publishing. We produced books and published them through St. John. (I was doing this prior to my business relationship with Norm.) I had a small studio on Park Avenue South, which sounds really fancy, but it wasn't. Guys like Carmine Infantino, Hy Rosen, and Alex Toth were up at that studio working. This was the late 1940s.

Carmine, Joe Giella, Frank Giacoia, Lee Elias—all of us were terribly affected by what we saw of other cartoonists. The three gods

DRAW for COMIC BOOKS!
Learn and earn in your spare time... at HOME!!
HUNDREDS OF NEW COMIC BOOKS ON SALE HAVE CREATED A TERRIFIC DEMAND FOR ARTISTS! NOW, A COMIC ILLUSTRATION COURSE HAS BEEN PERSONALLY PREPARED BY PROFESSIONAL COMIC BOOK ARTISTS!--TO ENABLE YOU TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL COMIC BOOK ARTIST YOURSELF! NORMAN MAURER AND JOE KUBERT, THE MEN WHO PRODUCED THE WORLD'S FIRST 3-D COMIC BOOK, WILL TEACH YOU TO DRAW FOR COMIC BOOKS!
HI - I'M JOE KUBERT. IN THESE ART LESSONS, I'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO DRAW STRAIGHT STYLE OR ADVENTURE COMICS! NORMAN AND I WILL GIVE YOU HUNDREDS OF IMPORTANT PROFESSIONAL TIPS--THINGS THAT WE'VE LEARNED DURING THE 30 YEARS WE'VE BEEN IN THE COMIC BOOK BUSINESS!
I'M NORMAN MAURER. MY SECTION OF THE ART LESSONS WILL SHOW HOW TO DRAW COMIC STYLE OR HUMOROUS COMICS. OUR LESSONS WILL ALSO TELL YOU HOW TO WRITE, LETTER AND COLOR FOR COMIC BOOKS. YOU CAN LEARN BY PRACTICING AS LITTLE AS 15 MINUTES A DAY--IN YOUR OWN HOME!
ADVENTURE
TOR
WEIRD
WHACK
3 STOOGES
PEPPER
TALENT IS NOT NECESSARY! THE DESIRE TO DRAW IS IMPORTANT!! THIS COMIC BOOK ILLUSTRATORS INSTRUCTION COURSE GIVES YOU ALL THE INSIDE SECRETS! SIMPLE LESSONS MAKE LEARNING A JOY! EASY TO UNDERSTAND AS A COMIC BOOK ITSELF! NEW, NOVEL TEACHING TECHNIQUE MAY ENABLE YOU TO DRAW REAL COMIC-TYPE FIGURES IN A MATTER OF MINUTES! ENROLLMENT LIMITED! ACT NOW!
mail this TODAY!
GET COMPLETE FIRST LESSON FOR ONLY $1.98 !
ON OUR MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE
OR
ASK FOR FREE INFORMATION!
TO: SCHOLART INSTITUTE
P.O. BOX 787, DEPT. T-354
BEVERLY HILLS, CALIFORNIA
I AM ANXIOUS TO START IMMEDIATELY. RUSH LESSON #1 TO ME. ENCLOSED, FIND $1.98 IN CASH, CHECK OR MONEY ORDER. MONEY RETURNED IN 10 DAYS IF I'M NOT COMPLETELY SATISFIED!
SEND FREE INFORMATION ON COMIC BOOK ILLUSTRATORS INSTRUCTION COURSE. I ASSUME NO OBLIGATION!
NAME
STREET
CITY
ZONE
STATE

The advertisement (first appearing in St. John comics of July 1954) announcing Kubert & Maurer's Comic Book Illustrators correspondence course. Art by Joe Kubert & Norman Maurer.

Right: Photo of the Kubert/Maurer team appearing on the inside front cover of One Million Years Ago *#1, Sept 1953. Inset: Cover to the first (and only) instruction booklet from the Scholart Institute, Los Angeles, CA.*



were Hal Foster ["Prince Valiant"], Alex Raymond ["Flash Gordon"], and Milton Caniff ["Terry and the Pirates"]. Of the three, we found out very quickly that the one we could follow and turn out the most work was Caniff. His style called for heavy blacks and quick line work, and it seemed to adapt itself and get finished more quickly for all of us.

Roy: *Back to this 1953 picture of you and Norm. Were the two of you* really *in the same studio much of time while you were both working for St. John? You said he'd moved to L.A....*
Joe: What happened was that when I got out of the Army, the first thing I did was take a trip with my wife out to California. We drove out, Muriel and I, with the express idea of visiting with Norm and Joanie, his wife, to discuss the idea of his coming in to work with me, to be a partner in producing these magazines. I told him St. John was all for it, and had given me *carte blanche* for anything I wanted to do. The first guy I thought of to be with me on this thing was Norm.

Roy: *Was he still drawing for Lev Gleason at that time? He did a lot of* Boy Comics *and* Daredevil....
Joe: No, he was pretty much out of the business. His wife Joanie is the daughter of one of the Three Stooges.

Roy: *Moe Howard. I know. She and Norm came to a couple of parties of Dann's and mine in the '80s, not long before Norm passed away. Very nice people.*
Joe: She's still a very, very dear friend. Norm had become involved in working with the Stooges at that time, and had gotten more and more involved with the movies. He was doing minimal comic book work until I spoke to him on the phone and said, "Look, we can make a good shot at this." He seemed very excited about the prospect, so we got together in California. That's how we were able to do the *Three Stooges* title at St. John—because of Norm's involvement. We set the deal and Norm then rented a place here in New Jersey. He moved his whole family east in order to accommodate the deal we were getting into.

When we first started *Tor, The Three Stooges,* and that whole set of books, Norm had already moved out here. He hadn't sold his home in California, as this was going to be an interim kind of thing—I can't recall how long it lasted, six months or a year—but he rented a house in Lake Hopatcong, which was only five miles from where I live. We used to go into the city together, and that's where we set up the whole business. That photo you mentioned is of Norm and me working at our office at St. John.

Roy: *A lot of people I know fondly recall all those those pages of panels that showed you and Norm speaking directly to us, the readers—with you usually puffing on a pipe, talking with it in your mouth (which is easier to do in a comic, I guess)—saying* Tor *didn't denigrate any religion, etc., holding up the* Life *magazine cover with the Bronto-saurus that came out around the same time. We readers were always intrigued with the pages that were shown pinned up on the walls behind you and Norm in these panels, pages of* Tor *and* Three Stooges *comics we hadn't yet seen—we kept wondering when those issues were coming out! It never occurred to us that you could just make those up!*
Joe: Norm and I had a reason for that. We didn't just arbitrarily go and do things. Those pictures and that kind of personal connection we were trying to make with the reader was one we felt was important for us. In your case and hopefully in many others, we succeeded, because people were able to identify that these books didn't just come out by machine; they were made by *people*, people who were interested in making a contact with readers. That was our purpose and that was our reason.

Roy: *The first ad for the Comic Book Illustrators Instruction Course appeared in the July 1954 issues of* Tor *and* The Three Stooges. *How did the course evolve?*
Joe: Norm and I were putting out perhaps half a dozen books, and we had access to the ad space in all of these books. We felt it might

be a good opportunity to start something like this. There was evidence that there were a lot of people out there who were interested. It's ironic that today, if a comic book is selling 30-40-50,000 copies, that's considered pretty good; but when we were putting out comics, if a book didn't sell at least 250,000, it was stopped.

Knowing we had that size audience, Norm and I were thinking, "Gee whiz, maybe there's something more we could be doing with this." I don't say we did this out of the goodness of our hearts; but we felt it would be a good deal for people who would be interested. Plus the fact that it would be something on the side for us. The cost of the comics was being absorbed by St. John—and we were able to put in virtually anything we wanted to put in the books.

Roy: *The first lesson was quite reasonably priced, at $1.00. You list eleven others at the end of the lesson. Were you influenced by the Famous Artists School?*

Joe: I don't even recall if that was in existence then. We tried to do something that was comparatively simple. I think there were ten or twelve pages in the entire booklet. We tried to put it together in a simple form, to get it out as quickly as we could. At that point Norm had already gone back to California, and that was an additional problem in trying to get the stuff together. Norm did one part of it, I did the other part, and we had to coordinate and collaborate on whatever we were doing, and then we finally put the thing together.

But the deadlines just played havoc with us, and it was just impossible. There were other things we were into and doing, and Norm was getting more and more involved with the movie industry, where of course he later became a director and producer for Columbia. That's really the reason why those lessons petered out.

HI - I'M JOE KUBERT... AND THIS IS NORMAN MAURER. THAT'S RIGHT - WE'RE THE PEOPLE WHO PRODUCE AND EDIT THIS MAG-AZINE. WE HOPE YOU'VE LIKED WHAT YOU'VE READ SO FAR. WE ALSO WANT TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK YOU FOR THE MANY WONDERFUL LETTERS WE'VE RECEIVED.
SOME OF THE LETTERS IN CONNECTION WITH OUR FIRST ISSUE OF ONE MILLION YEARS AGO, CAUSED US SOME CONSTERNATION. THEY SAID WE HAD TOTALLY IGNORED THE BELIEF THAT AN ALMIGHTY BEING ACTUALLY CREATED ALL PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.
IF WE'VE GIVEN THIS IMPRESSION, IT WAS NOT INTENTIONAL. OUR STORIES OF THE PREHISTORIC WORLD ARE BASED ON SCIENTIFIC STUDY AND THEORY. WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO TELL STORIES THAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED, BASED ON THESE SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS.
WE ARE NEITHER TRYING TO PROVE NOR DISPROVE THESE THEORIES. YOUR BIBLE, YOUR STANDARD OF CIVILIZATION IS NOT CONTESTED OR REFUTED IN ANY WAY.
FROM SKELETAL FOSSIL REMAINS UNCOVERED BY PALEANTOLOGISTS, WE KNOW ANIMALS SUCH AS BRONTOSAURUS AND TYRANNOSAURUS SEX DID EXIST. THEY ALSO TELL US THAT THESE BEASTS DIED OUT LONG BEFORE MAN CAME INTO EXISTENCE. THIS TOO, IS THEORY. SOME SEMBLANCE OF MAN COULD HAVE EXISTED AT THE TIME OF THE SLOW EXTINCTION OF THE GIANT REPTILES.
THE STORIES IN TOR ARE BASED ON THIS IDEA. WE FEEL, TOO, THAT ALTHOUGH MAN'S SURROUNDINGS HAVE CHANGED CONSIDERABLY, HIS BASIC EMOTIONS HAVE NOT!
THROUGHOUT THE SPAN OF MAN'S LIFE ON EARTH, HE HAS BEEN IN CONFLICT. BUT AN INHERENT DESIRE FOR PEACE AND CONTENTMENT HAS CAUSED MAN TO SEARCH FOR HIS GARDEN OF EDEN.
WITH THESE THOUGHTS IN MIND, WE HAVE PRODUCED THIS MAGAZINE. PERHAPS, BY PUTTING OUR PROBLEMS TODAY INTO THE WORLD OF ONE MILLION YEARS AGO, CAN THESE PROBLEMS COME INTO SHARPER FOCUS. NOW ... KEEP THOSE LETTERS COMING - AND WE HOPE YOU ENJOY OUR EFFORTS!
DINOSAURS
ANIMALS PAST

Norm and Joe deal "straight from the shoulder" with the reader on the issues of evolution/creationism (at right, from Tor *#3, May 1954) and the political climate against comic books (upper right, from* Tor *#5, Oct. 1954). This personal, respectful approach to addressing the reader adds significantly to the charms of the Kubert & Maurer-produced St. John comic books of the early-mid '50s. Art by Joe Kubert and Norman Maurer*

HI, JOE --- I'VE BEEN READING ABOUT SOMETHING IN THE NEWSPAPERS THAT SEEMS QUITE DIRECTLY TO BE ABOUT THESE ATTACKS ON COMIC BOOKS---
I KNOW NORM --- I WAS LISTENING TO THE RADIO A COMMITTEE HAS BEEN FORMED TO DETERMINE THE EFFECT CERTAIN COMIC BOOKS HAVE ON THE PEOPLE WHO READ THEM---
JOE --AS EDITORS OF THIS AND OTHER MAGAZINES, WHAT DO YOU SAY WE PUT OUT TO THE PEOPLE THAT ARE READING THIS COMIC BOOK RIGHT NOW?
I THINK THAT'S A GOOD IDEA NORM
FROM HERE ON, WE'RE GOING TO ADDRESS OURSELVES DIRECTLY TO YOU... NORMAN AND I ARE GOING TO SPEAK TO YOU STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER, AS TO OUR OWN POSITION IN THIS CONTROVERSY.
BOTH JOE AND I PRIDE OURSELVES IN PRODUCING GOOD, CLEAN COMICS. THE TYPE OF MAGAZINES THAT WE WOULDN'T BE ASHAMED TO ALLOW OUR OWN CHILDREN TO READ!
MUCH PLANNING AND RESEARCH GO INTO ALL OUR MAGAZINES AND THEY ARE CAREFULLY SCRUTINIZED AS TO MORAL CONTENT. WE TRY TO KEEP MAYHEM AT A MINIMUM --- AND STILL RETAIN THE EXCITEMENT, HUMOR, MYSTERY AND DRAMA THAT MAKE OUR BOOKS INTERESTING READING.
WE DON'T SAY ALL COMIC BOOKS ARE GOOD. NEITHER ARE ALL MOVIES, RADIO OR TELEVISION PROGRAMS, BOOKS OR NEWSPAPERS! BUT THIS DOES NOT SAY WE CONDEMN ANY OF THESE WONDERFUL MEDIA---
ALL COMICS ARE NOT FUNNY COMICS, AS SUCH. HAVE GONE FAR BEYOND THE REALM OF JUVENILE COMIC CONSUMPTION. AND AS WE ADULTS AS WELL AS YOUNGER PEOPLE END ENJOY MEN AND READ ON IN READING THE COMICS SHOW OUR PARENTS --- THEN DECIDE IF OUR EFFORTS ARE OF GOOD QUALITY. OUR INTENT IS TO PRODUCE THE VERY BEST THE MEDIUM OF COMIC BOOKS AIMS TO OFFER!!

Roy: *By the way, Lesson One was actually 16 pages. The ad you ran said: "Draw for Comic Books! Learn and earn in your spare time—at Home!!" In your panel you say you're going to teach things you've learned "during the 30 years we've been in the comic book industry." What did you do, add your years of experience and Norm's?*

Joe: [Laughs] That's exactly right! And if Norm were alive today, it would be over a *hundred* years!

Roy: *Then Norm tells how "You can learn by practicing as little as 15 minutes a day—in your own HOME!!" And there's a caption-box below your pictures that says, "Talent is not necessary; the desire to draw is important."*

Joe: I've always felt that's true, and I still feel that today. Absolutely. I think inborn talent is a vastly overrated commodity. I think that anybody can draw. The only reason people say they can't draw is because they haven't tried. You've got to start from scratch and you have to have the

desire; you've got to *want* to do it. And I don't think that that only applies to drawing; I think it applies to anything. You may not be a Michelangelo or Da Vinci or Picasso in art, but Christ, to do the stuff that *we* do? Anybody can do it!

Roy: *Be a journeyman comic book artist, perhaps, but not everyone is going to turn into a Norman Maurer or a Joe Kubert.*
Joe: But they'll be more than competent, and the competency will increase, the more they do it. This business of repetition, practicing, and drawing is really what it's all about. It's no different than exercising or lifting weights. If somebody sits down and attempts to draw 24 hours in one day and then doesn't want to draw for a month, forget about it! He's not going to pick up anything.

Roy: *I recall how, in the mid-'80s, one young artist didn't draw an assignment I'd given him when I was writing and editing* Secret Origins*—because he said he had to spend the time drawing sample pages to show at the San Diego con! [Laughs] I thought, this guy's a* nut! *He's preparing samples instead of doing a professional assignment! So I just wrote him off. Back in the early '60s, when I was a teacher in Missouri, a friend who was an art teacher said he loved working with grade school kids because they all could still draw; by the time they got to junior high, most of them couldn't draw anymore because they'd given up—someone would tell them that this line isn't straight or this doesn't look right.*
Joe: That is *so* true. There are more people who have been misdirected and have been aborted as far as drawing is concerned, simply because they were given the wrong information and the wrong direction when they were young. You take a look at any kindergarten class: Everybody draws! If they weren't [eventually] turned off—! I've had people come into the school here and say, "You know, I was going to high school and my art teacher said, 'Don't copy work; draw something original.'" Well, that's the toughest kind of assignment I could dream of! The only way that anybody learns to draw is to *begin* by copying the work that's been done before. Michelangelo and Da Vinci had ateliers where they would get young people to help them to copy each individual line, develop each line they're putting down, and to analyze why they're doing it—that's the way we all learn. You don't start by re-inventing the wheel all over again; you learn from those who have come before you.

Joe: That was the company we ran out of Norm's place where everything went through. Christ, I don't even think we incorporated!

Roy: *I also love the fact that those were the days when you could still ask people to send "cash, check, or money order" through the mails.*
Joe: I have to tell you that the stuff sold really well. It wasn't outrageous; we didn't sell a million copies, but we sold a couple of

HI, THERE...I'M JOE KUBERT AND THIS IS MY PARTNER NORMAN MAURER! BECAUSE OF THE MANY LETTERS WE'VE RECEIVED REQUESTING CRITICISM AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMIC ART PROFESSION, WE'VE COMPILED THIS ILLUSTRATED COURSE!
WE'VE TRIED TO PUT TOGETHER IN THIS AND THE FOLLOWING LESSONS ALL THAT WE'VE LEARNED DURING OUR MANY YEARS IN THIS FASCINATING BUSINESS!
AND THE PHASE OF THIS PROFESSION THAT MOST INTERESTS US IS THE ART OF CARTOONING, WHICH IS THE VERY LIFE-BLOOD OF THE COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY. I HANDLE THE COMIC STYLE, COMIC STRIP, AND THAT'S THE PHASE I'M GOING TO TEACH TO YOU!
THREE STOOGES
MY SPECIALTY IS THE STRAIGHT OR ADVENTURE STRIP! BETWEEN US, NORM AND I WILL TEACH YOU EVERY PHASE OF COMIC AND REALISTIC CARTOONING! A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF BOTH WILL HELP INSURE A SUCCESSFUL CAREER FOR YOU!
WE INTEND TO GO INTO EVERY ASPECT OF PRODUCING COMIC BOOKS FROM THE POINT WHERE THE ARTIST PENCILS HIS FIRST LINE, TO THE FINISHED COMIC BOOK ON YOUR LOCAL NEWSSTAND!
IN FORTHCOMING LESSONS WE'LL GO INTO DETAIL AND PASS ON TO YOU THE MANY TRICKS OF THE TRADE WE'VE LEARNED! AND WE'LL TEACH YOU TO SKILLFULLY USE THE HUNDREDS OF VARIED MATERIALS AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU MAKE A GOOD COMIC STRIP!
IN THE YEARS THAT JOE AND I HAVE BEEN PRODUCING COMIC BOOKS, WE'VE LEARNED QUITE A FEW OF THE DO'S AND DON'T'S OF CARTOONING... AND THEY'RE ALL YOURS IN THIS GROUP OF SPECIALLY PREPARED LESSONS!
WE BELIEVE THAT WITH THE PROPER DESIRE, ANYONE CAN LEARN TO BE A GOOD ARTIST AND EARN TOP MONEY!
BUT LIKE ANY OTHER SKILL, YOU HAVE TO CRAWL BEFORE YOU CAN WALK! SO ABOVE ALL, DON'T LET ANYTHING DISCOURAGE YOU FROM YOUR GOAL!
WORK DILIGENTLY AND REMEMBER, THE KEY WORD IS PRACTICE! DRAW, SKETCH, AND DRAW SOME MORE! IF YOUR DESIRE IS STRONG ENOUGH YOU'LL MAKE IT.... GOOD LUCK!

Again using the friendly approach, Norm and Joe introduce themselves in this page from the first (and only) edition of the Comic Book Illustrators Instruction Course *booklet, Lesson One: Drawing the Head. Note the* Boy Comics *and* Daredevil *covers in the background, reminders of features Joe and Norm had drawn a few years earlier. Art by Joe Kubert and Norman Maurer.*

Roy: *Many writers in comics are "failed artists." In my case, I still have the first comic I ever drew, around the age of seven or eight, and it was 30-40 pages total with several stories. My mother didn't throw enough stuff away, I guess.*
Joe: I'd love to see it—I really would.

Roy: *Bad as I was, I eventually got better—and if you and Norm had come out with the rest of your course, I would probably have turned out okay. [Laughs] What was the "Scholart Institute" in Beverly Hills, California, that's listed in your ad and in Lesson One itself?*

thousand. And the only reason we didn't continue it is because time wouldn't allow.

Roy: *It's strange that copies of your Course never seem to pop up in the market. I'm glad Al Dellinges has it, because mine got lost over the years. But if I sat down to draw a head today, I'd still use what I learned in those weeks I spent going over that lesson at age thirteen. Unfortunately, the bodies to go with them would look pretty bad. You and Norm divided the straight style and the humor between you, to give each of you a specialty. Who did all the lettering?*

NOW LET'S DO A PANEL!
BY THIS TIME, WE'VE COVERED THE DETAILS OF HOW THE HEAD IS CONSTRUCTED - NOW WE'RE READY TO GO A STEP FURTHER AND DO AN ENTIRE PANEL LIKE THOSE SHOWN BELOW!
BUT DON'T TRY DOING THIS UNTIL YOU'VE THOROUGHLY LEARNED THE LESSONS ON THE PRECEEDING PAGES! WHEN YOU FEEL YOU'VE MASTERED THOSE LESSONS YOU'RE READY TO TAKE A CRACK AT DOING A WHOLE PANEL!
Perhaps you wonder why we keep harping on the necessity of knowing how to draw both comic style and straight. It's because comic books and syndicated strips often sell in cycles. For a period of time, comic art sells like hot cakes and the comic artist is in great demand. Then, public taste may swing to a preference for straight art - and the rush is on to engage artists adept at that style. But when you're equally at home with BOTH styles of art, your chances of earning money ARE PRACTICALLY DOUBLED. The ability to handle EITHER straight or comic work is a form of JOB INSURANCE.
OMIGOSH! LOOK! HE'S COMING STRAIGHT AT US!
YIPE!
I MUST TRY TO SAVE HIM.

Here are two panels from our strips, **THE THREE STOOGES (left) and TOR (right).** On the next page, we take you behind the scenes to show you **HOW** these two pictures were produced from conception to completion.

This page and next: Instruction pages from the singular edition of the Comic Book Illustrators Instruction Course *booklet, Lesson One: Drawing the Head. Art by Joe Kubert and Norman Maurer*

recall reading that hype as a kid. I mostly remember the pages of you and Norm standing there in front of all those covers, talking to us—and all those head drawings, including how to draw heads of Tor and the Three Stooges.

Joe: I must admit I haven't seen that book in what's gotta be decades. I have a copy stuck away someplace, but I have to tell you that 99% of all the stuff that was written, I just don't recall at all. I just know we tried to be as honest as I possibly could with the information that we were disseminating.

Roy: *The two panel-descriptions you have in Lesson One are the first example that I (and at least a couple of thousand other people) ever saw of even the tiniest bit of a comic book script. On one page, along with the art, there was a panel each of the Three Stooges and Tor. I remember when I first started writing scripts, as a teenager, those two panels were the only things I had to go by.*

Joe: Most of the people who come to the school today have no significant idea of what a comic script looks like and how you apply yourself to doing a comic book page into an illustrated form based on a written page to begin with. But I want to mention, Roy, here and now: The whole idea of what I'm doing with the *new* correspondence course is to permit those people who have any sort of interest in doing this kind of work to have access to the way it's done in comic books by professionals. There is no indication given

Joe: Probably Norm, who was an extraordinary letterer. He taught me how to letter. Norm was the first guy who showed me how to file a pen down so you could use it for lettering.

Roy: *Who is Michael Brand, "Director, Scholart Institute," who's written a full-page introduction on the inside front cover of Lesson One?*

Joe: That must have been someone Norm had hired to take care of the bookkeeping.

Roy: *The intro mentions "the comic book industry of which one day you may be a part." I wonder if you've heard from any other comic book pro besides me who said they bought that 1954 course? Oh, and Al Dellinges has had a bit of work published by DC.*

Joe: I don't know of anybody besides you guys who did it. If they have, I don't remember.

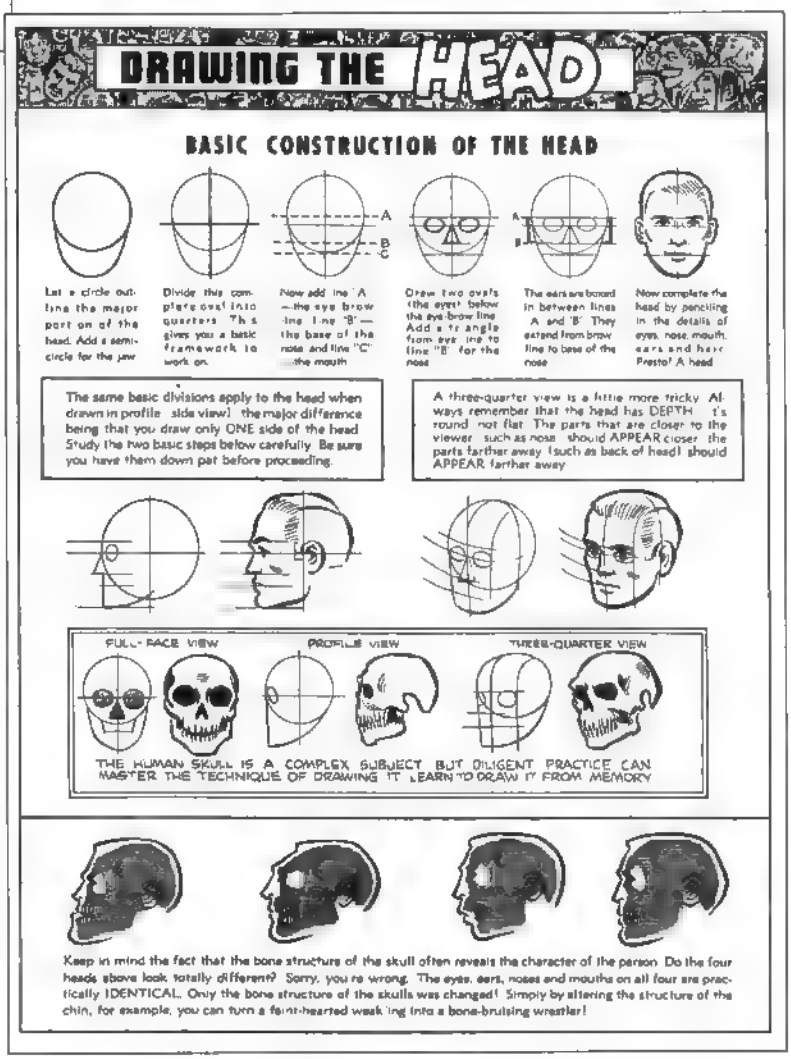
Roy: *There's one thing in Brand's introduction that kinda bugs me, in retrospect. He says, "The work of all these people"—it mentions writers, colorists, typographers, engravers, and even truck drivers and retail clerks—"would count for nothing if not for the CREATIVE LABOR OF THE COMIC BOOK ARTIST. His is the hand that transforms the drab, typewritten pages of the writer into original comic book characters that live and breathe!"*

Joe: I deny any ties or relationship with those lines at all! [Laughs]

Roy: *It also says, "Comic book artists are among the highest-paid craftsmen in the United States. Many of them earn in excess of $10-15,000 a year and some make as much as $5000 a week."*

Joe: What a hoke! [Laughs]

Roy: *It's funny—when I looked at this booklet again recently, I didn't*


DRAWING THE HEAD
BASIC CONSTRUCTION OF THE HEAD
Let a circle outline the major part of the head. Add a semi-circle for the jaw
Divide this complete oval into quarters. This gives you a basic framework to work on.
Now add line 'A' — the eye brow line. Line 'B' — the base of the nose and line 'C' — the mouth
Draw two ovals (the eyes) below the eye brow line. Add a 'T' angle from eye line to line 'B' for the nose
The ears are based in between lines 'A' and 'B'. They extend from brow line to base of the nose
Now complete the head by pencilling in the details of eyes, nose, mouth, ears and hair. Presto! A head
The same basic divisions apply to the head when drawn in profile (side view). The major difference being that you draw only ONE side of the head. Study the two basic steps below carefully. Be sure you have them down pat before proceeding.
A three-quarter view is a little more tricky. Always remember that the head has DEPTH. It's round, not flat. The parts that are closer to the viewer, such as nose, should APPEAR closer; the parts farther away (such as back of head) should APPEAR farther away
FULL-FACE VIEW
PROFILE VIEW
THREE-QUARTER VIEW
THE HUMAN SKULL IS A COMPLEX SUBJECT BUT DILIGENT PRACTICE CAN MASTER THE TECHNIQUE OF DRAWING IT. LEARN TO DRAW IT FROM MEMORY
Keep in mind the fact that the bone structure of the skull often reveals the character of the person. Do the four heads above look totally different? Sorry, you're wrong. The eyes, ears, noses and mouths on all four are practically IDENTICAL. Only the bone structure of the skulls was changed! Simply by altering the structure of the chin, for example, you can turn a faint-hearted weakling into a bone-bruising wrestler!

IT ALL STARTED W TH THE ACTUAL SCENES AS TURNED N BY THE WRITER AND REPRODUCED BELOW TAKE A SECOND LOOK AT THE SCR PTS THEY NCLUDE EVERYTH NG THE ARTISTS HAD TO GO ON NOTE THE WEALTH OF DETAILS ADDED BY THE ARTISTS WHICH THE WRITER NEVER EVEN THOUGHT OF
Panel #7 Scene: Close up of Moe, scared expression on his face. Larry and Shemp also scared. They are in castle.
MOE: OMIGOSH! Look! he's comin' straight at us!
LARRY: Yipe
Panel #2 Scene: Close up of Tor's face very determined expression. Some background
TOR: I MUST try to save him!
CAPTION: -none-
The same basic procedure is followed in both comic and straight drawings. First the box or panel is "blocked in" w th pencil. At this point the artist arranges or stages his characters so that they form good composition, and ACT OUT the writer's story
After block ng in your picture, the next step s to penc in CAREFULLY the features and background. At this stage, the all-important balloon or dialogue is inserted. This is done to give you an idea of how much room must be allowed for it in the finished art
Your pencilled drawing should be COMPLETE before you start inking it. You then ink your drawing, allow the ink to dry and erase (with a soft eraser) the underlying pencil sketches. It is NOT necessary to do your lettering in ink. In future lessons, you will be taught correct lettering technique. Like cartooning, lettering is an art in itself

in any of the lessons that you can do this stuff and become a professional; this is not for professional people.

The correspondence course is to satisfy the questions people want answered, the most basic things people want to know as it relates to the comic book business—cartooning, writing, illustrating, techniques, inking, and so on. There may be people who may be able to benefit from it to the extent that they *may* decide they want to come into this profession, and they will be able to develop themselves to the point where they may be able to do it. But that is *not* the main purpose of the new correspondence course.

The *School* is dedicated to those people who want to become fulltime professionals. *That's* the distinct difference. I'm not saying, "Come over and make a million dollars by taking these correspondence lessons. Join the highest-paying business in the world and become a comic book artist." That's not my inference at all.

Roy: *The second lesson of the twelve you announced on the inside back cover was "Drawing the Male Figure." Was any other course done, or were you waiting to see how the first one sold?*

Joe: I don't think it was ever done. I don't recall salvaging anything.

Roy: *Is there anything else you'd like to say about the new correspondence course, Joe Kubert's World of Cartooning?*

Joe: The course is the result of three years of effort by myself combined with several other people, including my two sons. I hope it's going to be beneficial in terms of answering the questions of a lot of people who are tempted to ask what the hell is really going on with the comic book business—how you draw for comic books and how you prepare your work.

This course, as opposed to the earlier one, is a combination of books, of lessons which will be sent in and critiqued (which are done on tracing paper overlays and returned to the people—homework lessons), and of the video which shows "how to." The video supplements the books by actually giving live demonstrations, and I'm in all of them.

Roy: *So this is the modern-day equivalent to those friendly "Joe and Norm" pages you two did forty to fifty years ago.*

Joe: That's correct. It's a tremendous update. There about $75 worth of material that's included with this course—brushes, pens, and inks; all the basic material that anybody needs in order to take their first foray into drawing for comic books.

COMIC BOOK ILLUSTRATORS
INSTRUCTION COURSE
by
Norman Maurer and Joe Kubert

LESSON NUMBER	
ONE	DRAWING THE HEAD
TWO	THE MALE FIGURE IN ACTION
THREE	THE FEMALE FIGURE IN ACTION
FOUR	CLOTHING THE FIGURE
FIVE	INTERPRETING THE COMIC STRIP Layouts and composition
SIX	PENCILING THE COMIC STRIP Research, characters and background
SEVEN	DRAWING ANIMALS FOR COMICS
EIGHT	SECRETS OF BASIC INKING
NINE	ADVANCED INKING AND LETTERING
TEN	DRAWING A COMPLETE COMIC STRIP
ELEVEN	WRITING FOR COMICS
TWELVE	SECRETS OF PUBLISHING COMIC BOOKS How to get a job as a comic strip artist

The unfulfilled course syllabus as featured on the back cover of the lone instruction booklet. Check out the ad in CBA for Joe Kubert's latest correspondence course!

Roy: *You don't have any immediate retirement plans, then?*

Joe: I don't think so, Roy. I consider myself one of the luckiest people in the world because I'm able to do this and continue to do this. I'm more excited about what I'm doing—I'm waiting to get into my *next* project—after the course, after the stuff I'm now working on, after the videos. There's a book I'm going to be doing that I've already blocked out, and a book that I'm working on for Watson-Guptill. I'm pretty busy.

Fin

B A T M A N I A

FIRST OF AN ON-GOING SERIES ON THE BEST OF THE 1960S FANZINES

by Bill Schelly

Comics fans had existed on the fringes of science-fiction fan groups as early as the 1930s, but it wasn't until Dick and Pat Lupoff's Xero *in Sept. 1960 that a continuing series of articles about comics graced an SF "fanzine" (a term coined by SF fandom for amateur fan magazines). This seminal series, "All in Color for a Dime," was the bellwether for an outpouring of appreciation for comic books and strips. Starting with the March 1961 publication of the original* Alter Ego *(founded by Jerry Bails with the help of Roy Thomas), a comics fandom especially for super-hero fans took hold. At virtually the same time, SF/comics fans Don and Maggie Thompson launched* Comic Art, *dedicated to all facets of comic strips and comic books. Numerous fanzines were launched by a talented, energetic group of teenagers and young adults in the wake of this initial trio. Distributed through the mail to points all around the globe, these fanzines had a special charm and provided vital hobby information....*

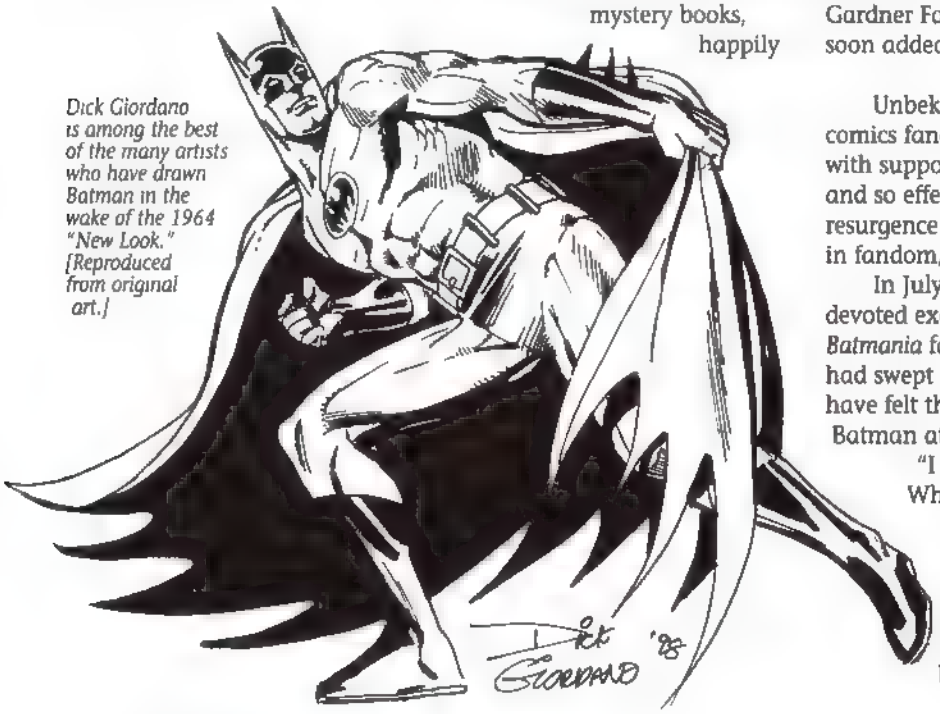
"For Batman, we accept nothing as impossible."
—Motto of the Batmanians

Despite the remarkable longevity of Gotham City's Caped Crusader, his career has definitely had its hills and valleys. One of the lowest points came in 1963, when his two titles had suffered through too many years of strange aliens and formula stories. Sales figures had dipped alarmingly, and National Periodical Publications decided *something had to be done.*

The story goes that editor Jack Schiff threw up his hands in dismay, claiming he had tried every type of cover imaginable to attract readers, to no avail. He retreated to the safe haven of the DC mystery books, happily relinquishing the editorial chores of *Batman* and *Detective Comics* to fellow editor Julius Schwartz.

Above: Biljo White, with fellow Batman fan Ronn Foss, examining a copy of Batman *#1 in the White House of Comics, circa 1963.*

Schwartz was given the job of reinvigorating the Batman comics. He assigned his favorite writer, John Broome, to raise the level of the stories, and his most popular artist, Carmine Infantino, to upgrade the visuals. Schwartz decided the new stories would emphasize Batman's detective prowess and crime-fighting skills. The gimmickry of the past was jettisoned, as was the Batman "family" (Batwoman, Batgirl, Bathound, Bat-Mite). The first of the "New Look" issues were *Detective Comics* #327 (May 1964) and *Batman* #164 (June 1964). Gardner Fox and a revitalized Sheldon Moldoff, among others, were soon added to the creative mix.



Dick Giordano is among the best of the many artists who have drawn Batman in the wake of the 1964 "New Look." [Reproduced from original art.]

Unbeknownst to the powers-that-be at DC Comics, the fledgling comics fandom movement of the early 1960s was about to weigh in with support for the Caped Crusader that was so perfectly timed, and so effective, that it must be given some degree of credit for the resurgence of interest in Batman and Robin (and the "New Look")—in fandom, at least.

In July 1964, Bill J. "Biljo" White launched the first fanzine devoted exclusively to one costumed character, coining the term *Batmania* for its title—no doubt inspired by the Beatlemania that had swept the U.S. earlier in the year. Some might understandably have felt that assigning the term "mania" to anything relating to Batman at this point in time was the sheerest wishful thinking.

"I felt it was time for someone to stand up for Batman," White stated in a recent interview. "I thought, `Why not *me?'"*

Biljo White earned his living as a firefighter in the mid-sized town of Columbia, Missouri, home of the University of Missouri. He had long considered Batman his favorite comics character, a devotion which had begun with his purchase of *Batman* #1 off a newsstand in

Sheldon "Shelly" Moldoff's rendition of Batman and two of his arch enemies, Catwoman and the Penguin. [From the private collection of Roy Thomas.] Batman, Catwoman, the Penguin ©1998 DC Comics.

1940. White owned a near-complete run of the Golden Age Batman comics, which he kept under lock and key in a cinder-block structure in his backyard. With tongue in cheek, he nicknamed that building "The White House of Comics."

Having grown up reading comics in the '40s, he naturally reserved his greatest admiration for the days when Bob Kane had worked on the strip, and when Batman had been truly a creature of the night. Kane was one of White's idols, alongside artists Alex Raymond, C.C. Beck, and Hal Foster.

An aspiring artist showing considerable potential, Biljo had begun drawing as a youth, and had continued honing his skills during a stint in the military in Germany, doing a regular cartoon for the base newspaper called "The New Bunch." Soon after his discharge, he wrote a letter to Bob Kane c/o DC Comics, asking for hints about getting into the comics field, and received a gracious three-page handwritten reply, in which Kane suggested: "You can even go up to see my outfit [DC] and mention my name. Ask to see Jack Schiff, one of the editors."

Circa 1955, he traveled to New York City to show his portfolio to Schiff, hoping to gain a Batman assignment. Unfortunately, the DC editor didn't offer encouragement. "Mr. Schiff left me with the knowledge that, when artists were needed, it was an easy matter to obtain them through the area art schools," White recalled recently.

Biljo became one of early comics fandom's most active fan writers and artists. Beginning with *Komix Illustrated* in 1962, he published a slew of fanzines and contributed comics features to many others of the day, including *Masquerader, Star-Studded Comics,* and *Alter Ego.* In fact, he was briefly set to succeed Ronn Foss as the third editor/publisher of *A/E,* until it became clear that *Batmania—the Fanzine Especially for Batman Fans* was his first love. (Fellow Missourian Roy Thomas then took the helm of *A/E,* though Biljo served as art editor for Roy's three fan-produced issues.)

White was brimming with ideas for *Batmania,* but he realized one ingredient was lacking: DC's official permission to publish a magazine full of illustrations of one of their premier trademarked properties.

"I had such confidence that I printed [the first issue] up and sent a copy to Julie Schwartz," White recalls. "I told him I was prepared to destroy the entire print run if he didn't approve. Luckily, he did."

In *Batmania* #1, Biljo announced the formation of the Batmanians, an informal organization of Batman fans which would boost the cause of Batman and Robin in every possible way. White sent official membership certificates to each new member, with his/her name filled in and a membership number assigned. Everyone who received the fanzine was automatically inducted into the club. A drawing of the Batmanians (by White) which depicted the members as a group of shadowy figures all wearing the cape and cowl of the Darknight Detective gave the group the aura of a secret fraternal order. When Julius Schwartz printed a plug for the zine in *Batman* #169, the membership roster of the Batmanians grew nearly 1000-strong. In each issue, White printed one or two pages of the addresses in the "Batmanians Roll Call" section.

"Truthfully, I was surprised by the demand for copies of *Batmania* #1," Biljo admits. "I kept printing up more and more copies, until the ditto masters gave out—and I still couldn't satisfy all the requests. It convinced me more than ever that there was a large body of fans who enjoyed the adventures of Batman and Robin as much as I did."

Batmania provided page after page of features which both entertained and educated readers on aspects of the Dynamic Duo's career in the late 1930s. (The 25¢ annuals and giants of the 1960s generally reached only a few years into Batman's past for their reprints.) Beginning in issue #2, the first of two landmark articles called "Batman before Robin" appeared, recounting what Batman was like in the year before he adopted Dick Grayson as his ward.

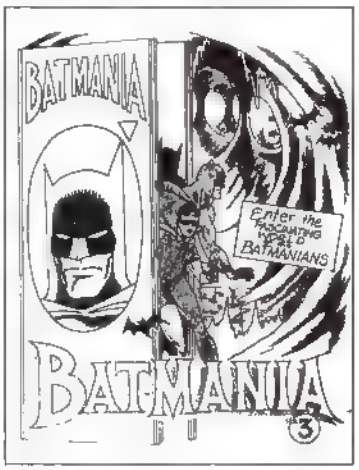
Younger readers were shocked to learn that their hero had occasionally used a gun in those 1939 adventures, and that he had *deliberately killed* one of his foes. When White printed a large re-creation of a grimacing Batman firing a machine gun from the Batplane, muttering, "Much as I hate to take human life, I'm afraid *this time* it's necessary!", it was a real eye-opener. Remember, this was long before Batman had returned to his roots as a frightening denizen of the night.

Another popular feature of the fanzine was "The Batmanians Speak," a forum where fans sent in their views on any topic they

Batmania #1.

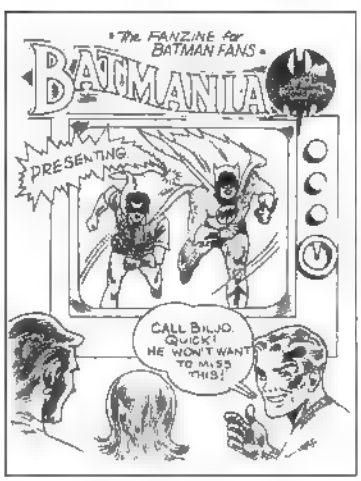
cared to discuss. Naturally, the first debate centered on Batman's New Look. Some, like the erudite Richard Kyle (originator of the term "graphic story"), were reluctant to give up on the Old Look: "Under Jack Schiff [Kyle wrote in *Batmania* #3, January 1965], both the story and the art had deteriorated seriously, but Batman's essential character remained the same. Today's Batman story is better, technically; today's art is, as well. But the stories are about another man who is wearing Batman's costume, and the illustrations depict him as a well-muscled ballet dancer who can do anything the old Batman can do, except be convincing in the part. The old character was not only good, it still is. Instead of being junked... it should have been used as the base for the New Look."

Others, however, took a quite different view. Rick Weingroff wrote, "There can be no doubt that the... artwork and writing have both been raised to a higher level." Ronn Foss even liked the new yellow circle around Batman's chest-insignia, "not only marking the change in quality, but fulfilling a long-needed lack of balance in the yellow on Batman."



Batmania #3.

Editor White concluded, "It is my misfortune that I do not know Bob Kane personally... but as a dedicated follower of his great creation, I am also a supporter of Bob Kane. If a vote of confidence is needed, my vote has been cast. Everything else aside, I don't think Infantino's super-realistic drawings are suited to... the qualities of the bizarre and mysterious that gave the original stories such atmosphere. Like the Dick Tracy strip, Batman needs a touch of the cartoony to keep it from being absurd. In that context, oddball villains like the Joker and the Penguin seem normal and reasonably believable."



Batmania #7

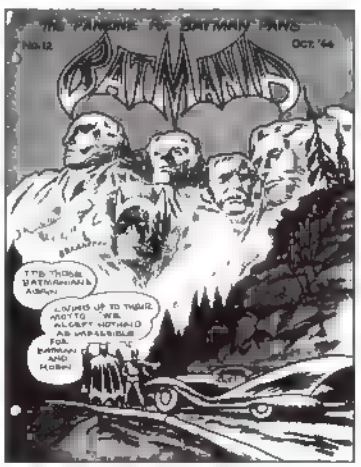
The great majority of his readers, however, resoundingly supported the New Look. In the first annual Batmania Poll, their answer to the question "Do you prefer the New Look Batman over the Old Look?" was ninety percent "Yes!"

After a lead article and the readers' forum, issues of *Batmania* would typically be filled out by "Comic Oddities," a compendium of funny or strange information about comic books of the past, and "Bat-Facts" which presented all manner of trivia about the Dynamic Duo. There were also advertisements to buy, sell, or trade old comics, as well as checklists, news of the Batmanians, and occasional features on non-Batman material like the James Bond craze. Issues ran from twenty to thirty pages, first with covers printed via spirit duplicator (with that distinctive purple printing), and then via photo-offset, occasionally incorporating photos.

One of the most intriguing articles to appear was "The Big Parade" by Tom Fagan of Rutland, Vermont (*Batmania* #3). Fagan revealed to comicdom that Batman was the parade marshal of the annual Rutland Halloween Parade, and he invited one and all to attend—and they *did*, as covered elsewhere in this very issue of *Alter Ego*.

A key reason for the formation of comics fandom was to provide collectors with data about their favorite comic books. Who were the artists? The writers? For the most part, no one knew, until the information was gradually ferreted out by tenacious fans.

Most Batman readers, for example, assumed that Bob Kane wrote and drew all the adventures of the Darknight Detective, because his name appeared in the splash panel of each and every story. During the 1960s the cover was ripped off this myth, and it became known that a whole platoon of writers and artists had toiled to produce those memorable tales, and no one had done more for the character of Batman than scripter Bill Finger. Therefore, when Finger joined in a panel discussion at the 1965 New York comic con, fans learned (most for the first time) how much he had contributed



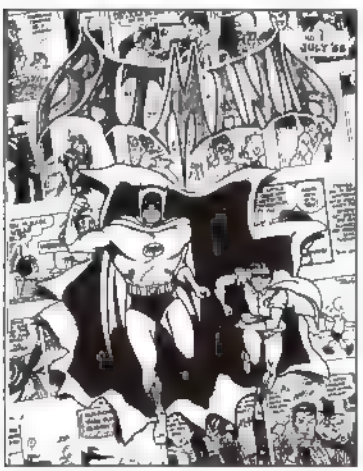
Batmania #12.

Bill Finger revealed that he had written *the very first Batman story* in *Detective* #27... and hundreds more during the 1940s and 1950s. He recalled to eager fans how he had received a phone call from Bob Kane announcing that he'd just drawn a new costumed hero called "The Bat-Man," and asking him to come over right away to help Kane further develop the character. Finger said he had come up with the name "Gotham City" and many other aspects of the strip. And he loved to write scripts calling for Batman and Robin to battle villains amid giant props like over-sized typewriters, musical instruments, and bowling pins. Fans who attended this early comic con were fortunate, indeed, for Bill Finger didn't attend many fan gatherings.

Finger's statements at this convention, and in discussions with key fans like Tom Fagan, led fandom co-founder Jerry Bails to write a piece called "If the Truth Be Known, or, A Finger in Every Plot!" Though it saw print in *CAPA-Alpha* #12 (September 1965), it deserves

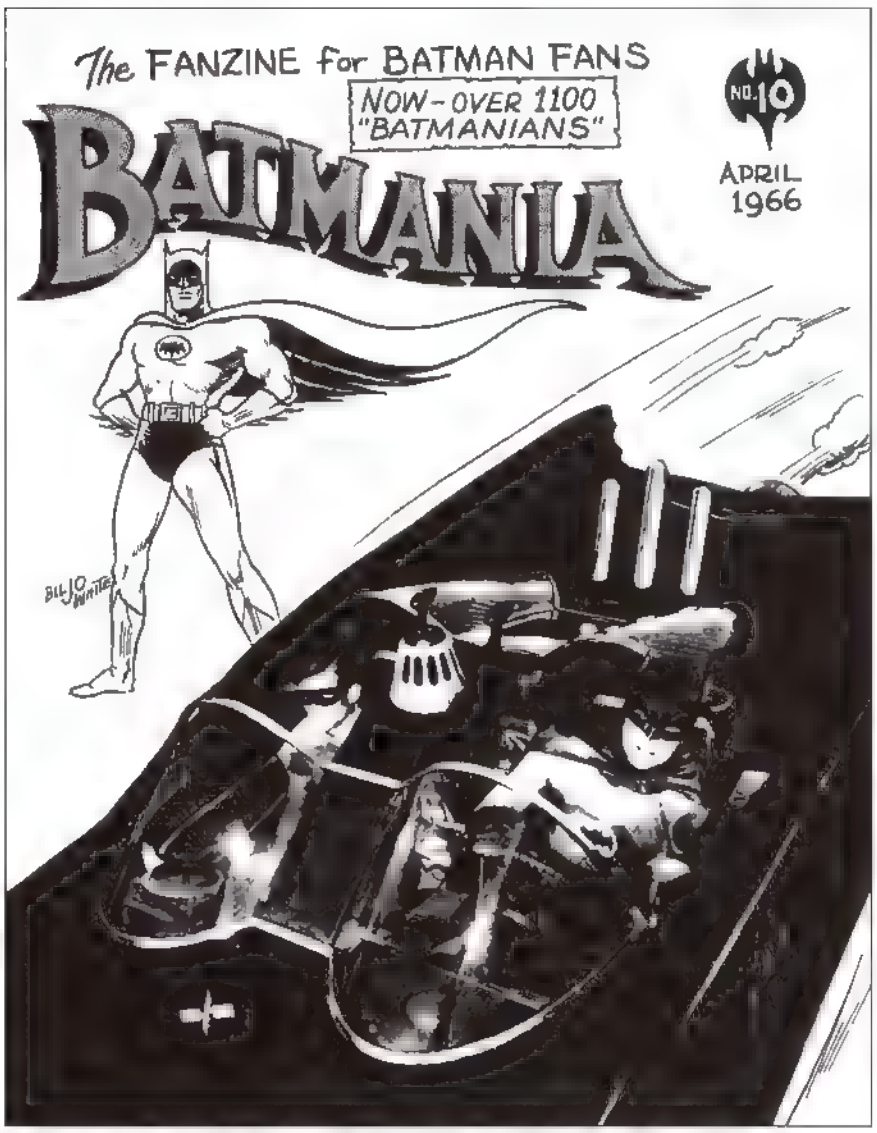
summarizing here, because of its soon-to-come fallout in *Batmania*.

The article commenced by focusing upon "a small piece of notepaper tucked away in a desk drawer" somewhere in Greenwich Village, New York City: "Both sides of the notepaper are crammed with possible names—all short, snappy monikers, like Pepper, Socko, Tiger, and Wildcat—nothing as *blah* as Batboy, Kid Bat, or Batlad. No, this was to be the trademark for 'The Greatest Character Find of 1940!'" The latter, of course, was the young hero soon to be christened Robin the Boy Wonder, presumably after Robin Hood as much as the red-breasted bird; and both notepaper and desk drawer belonged to Bill Finger, whom Jerry Bails called "The Silent Legend behind the Batman!"



Batmania #11

Jerry detailed how Bob Kane had hired the unassuming Finger to write his (Kane's) feature "Rusty and His Pals" and then "Batman." With Batman's success, Bill soon began working directly for DC, co-creating such famous strips as "Green Lantern" and "Wildcat." He was noted for his ability to "adapt the freewheeling style of the pulps to the four-color panels, and break down the action of a Douglas Fairbanks-type adventurer into a panel-by-panel description for the artist."



The prevailing influence of the Batman TV show is evident in the cover to Batmania *#10.*

The *K-a* article was probably the first anywhere to publicly state that "Bill is the man who first put words in the mouth of the Guardian of Gotham." By Finger's account, Jerry went on, "The cowl and cape, the utility belt and gauntlet, were all Bill's contribution to the dialogue that gave rise to the final form of Batman's famous costume"—along with the Joker and "all the other principals and supporting characters of the early strip: Robin, of course, but also Commissioner Gordon (who appeared in the first Batman story), Alfred, the Penguin, and the Catwoman, as well as the many unusual and sympathetic characters that made the early Batman so popular."

While recognizing that other writers (beginning with Gardner Fox, who had scripted the third Batman tale) had also contributed to the strip, Jerry credited Bill with being by far the most important Batman writer, and a co-creator of the Darknight Detective.

"When fans clamor for a return to the Days of Old when Batman was a mystery man who battled the underworld in action-packed human-interest yarns," Jerry said in conclusion, "they are clamoring—if the truth be known—for the return of the *Batman as created by Bill Finger!*"

This provocative article, which in retrospect seems almost to overreach in places to make its point (*e.g.*, artist Jerry Robinson is a third comics professional who has claimed to have created the Joker), sparked a fiery response—from none other than Bob Kane himself.

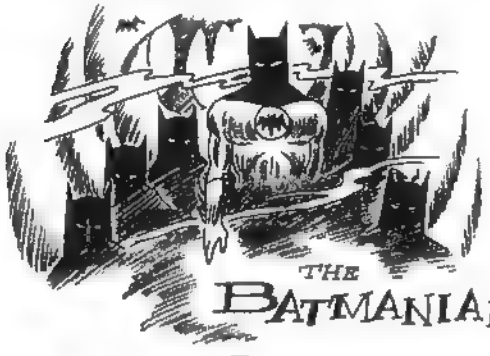
However, Kane's lengthy retort, written just days after seeing the Bails piece, didn't appear until the *Batmania Annual* in 1967. Why did it take so long to see print?

White has written, "I had originally planned to print [Kane's letter] in *Batmania* immediately upon its arrival. But... Associate Editor Tom Fagan—who was in contact with Bill Finger—told me that Finger and Kane were getting together to talk things over... and that I should hold up the article until further notice. Whether Bill Finger and Bob Kane ever got together I can't say," White continued. Biljo wrote immediately to his idol for news of that meeting, but never received a reply. Finally, White decided that, response or no, he should print Kane's letter for all of fandom to evaluate for themselves.

Certainly, in the years that followed, Kane became more generous in his recognition of Finger's contribution than he was in this early letter. Therefore, the letter he wrote to *Batmania* in 1965 is reprinted here not as an attempt to stir up an old controversy, especially in light of his recent passing, but as a fascinating artifact of the time.

The Bob Kane Letter

BATMAN'S FIRST ARTIST DISCUSSES THE CREATION OF THE DARKNIGHT DETECTIVE IN A 1965 MISSIVE TO BILJO WHITE, *BATMANIA* EDITOR



c/o National Per. Pub.
575 Lexington Avenue
New York, New York
September 14th, 1965

Biljo White
Post Office Box 115
Columbia, Missouri 65202

AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL "BATMANIANS" EVERYWHERE

Dear Biljo.

First, I would like to commend you on your dedication to perpetuate the legend of "Batman" through your "Fanzine" Batmania, which I think is a very constructive gesture on your part. I'd like you to know that I have been reading it with great interest since its inception but due to a busy schedule, could not find the time to write you until now.

Now, Biljo, I'd like to emphatically set the record straight, once and for all, about the many 'myths' and 'conjectures' that I read about myself and my creation, "Batman," in your "Fanzine" and other publications. I can only call all the stories I read about myself "conjectures," because most of them are written without my advice or consent, and, therefore, cannot be entirely the truth, because how can an article about me or the Batman be the true story, when I am not consulted or interviewed? It only stands to reason then, that the writers write what they "think" is the truth, by receiving their information from second and third parties, in fragments, until what I read is so distorted that I cannot believe that the person they are talking about is myself. (They also do this to the movie stars whom they never even interviewed.)

It is true, however, that much is written about the "Batman" because he is publicly exposed in print, but very little is known personally about Bob Kane, his creator, because I haven't given out that many interviews. Here, for the first time, straight from the "horse's mouth' is the real inside story about myself and "Batman," with no holds barred, and I intend to explode the myths about myself and get down to the real truth about the legend that is "Batman," so, fasten your seat belts, Batmanians, as the fireworks begin.

We can call this story, "Inside Bob Kane," or will the real creator of "Batman" sign in, please!

The Myth: Bob Kane is not the sole creator of "Batman." (I've heard this a thousand times in my lifetime), that "Batman" was really created

Biljo White

by Bill Finger, Jerry Robinson, Carmine Infantino, Jack Schiff, Julie Schwartz, my publisher, etc., etc., and my housekeeper!

The Truth: All hogwash! I, Bob Kane, am the sole creator of "Batman." I created "Batman" in 1939, and it appeared, if memory serves me correctly, in Detective Comics as a six or eight page story, and I signed the first strip, "Robert Kane."

I read your article that you sent to me, "If the Truth be Known," "A Finger in Every Ploc," and it seemed to me that Bill Finger has given out the impression that he and not myself created the "Batman," as well as Robin and all the other leading villains and characters. This statement is fraudulent and entirely untrue! That is "myth" and I quote an excerpt from the article written by Jerry G. Bails, "The Cowl and Cape, the utility belt and gauntlets were all Bill's contribution."

Also, further down in the article and again I quote, "Bill also created Robin, of course, but also Commissioner Gordon, (who appeared in the first Batman story), Alfred the Penguin, The Catwoman, etc., etc.

I challenge Bill to repeat those statements in front of me. I am sorry that I was absent from the comicdom's convention, so that I could have answered him. The truth is that Bill Finger is taking credit for much more than he deserves, and I refute much of his statements here in print. The fact is that I conceived the "Batman" figure and costume entirely by myself, even before I called Bill in to help me write the 'Batman." I created the title, masthead, the format and concept, as well as the Batman figure and costume. Robin, the boy wonder, was also my idea, not Bill's.

The only proof I need to back my statement is that if Bill co-authored and conceived the idea, either with me or before me, then he would most certainly have a by-line on the strip along with my name, the same as Sigel and Schuster had as creators of Superman. However, it remains obvious that my name appears on the strip alone, proving that I created the idea first and then called Bill in later, after my publisher okayed my original creation.

(Attention Jerry G. Bails; the self-appointed authority on Batman. If Bill Finger created Batman, as you wrote, where is Bill Finger's by-line on my strip? It is conspicuous by its absence. So?)

Now, Biljo, in all fairness to Bill, I will admit he was influential in aiding me in shaping up the strip, and there are certain characters Bill created, aside from my main characters, and many other characters that I created, including the Batmobile. It's been 25 years now, and truthfully, time sometimes blurs the memory and it is difficult to separate, at times, the myth from the truth, so that I cannot blame Bill too much if at times his memory "clouds."

In the late '60s and early '70s, Neal Adams became perhaps the ultimate "New Look" artist—when he and Denny O'Neil took Batman back to his roots as a "creature of the night."

Biljo White

-3-

September 14, 1965

Aside to Jerry G. Bails: I ought to sue you for misrepresentation and distortion of the truth about your "Finger Article" that blatantly intimates that Bill Finger was the true creator behind Batman, and not Bob Kane. Your article is completely misleading, loaded with untruths fed to you by Finger's hallucinations of grandeur.

May I say to you, Mr. Bails, that before you wrote so smugly and assuredly about Bill Finger being the real creator and "tour de force" behind the Batman for publication, don't you think that you should have double-checked your information back to me, so that I could verify and clarify Bill Finger's comments? After all, I was involved with the Batman, don't you think? But, of course, you minimized my part in the creation and maximized Bill Finger's part, only because you listened to one side of the story - Finger's side. I am sure that you have heard that there are "two sides to every story"? At any rate, now you've heard my side. Are you still convinced about Finger's immortality?

I am sick and tired of opinionated people, like yourself, who throughout the years have written distorted and untrue stories about how Batman was created and by whom, receiving their information from unreliable sources, when it would have been much easier to get the true story simply by contacting me, the one and only creator of Batman, that could be proven so easily by merely asking my publisher or simply by looking at the lone by-line of "Bob Kane" on the strip.

I'd also like to state here, Mr. Bails, that although Bill Finger literally typed the scripts in the early days, that he wrote the scripts from ideas that we mutually collaborated on and that many of the unique concepts and story twists also came from my own fertile imagination and that I was not just a pupper cartoonist alone, following a writer's script and contributing nothing more than the art work.

Many a story I "silently" wrote by giving Bill the premise and he took the ball from there. (I am sure that Bill failed to mention this fact?)

You see, I am also a writer and that is a fact not known by the public in general. The point is, I didn't have the time to literally write and draw the strip at the same time. However, I personally wrote many stories of my early creations, Clip Carson, Rusty and his Pals, Ginger-snap, etc., even before Mr. Finger was called into the picture.

The Myth (continued): The "New Look" Batman. It has been hinted and at times stated openly that I do not draw the "New Look" Batman, that I am retired and out of the picture. Many of my fans think that Carmine Infantino has taken over the strip and there is constant mention of many fans in your "Fanzine" who are overly concerned about who inks the strip, who pencils it, who letters it, etc.

Biljo White

-4-

September 14, 1965

The Truth: First of all, let me state that I still draw about ninety percent of all Batman stories. I do all the stories for Batman Bi-monthly, and share Detective Comics with Infantino, who draws every other one. Infantino now does all the covers for Batman and Detective Comics. As for inking and lettering, I am not too sure myself who finishes my pencils. However, the results are good, so I don't care.

I do know one thing though, that in the 'Golden Age" of Batman, I pencilled, inked, and lettered my strip by myself.

I've often been asked, do I like the "New Look" Batman better than the old look. My answer to that question is, "Emphatically, no!!" (Although there are certain aspects of the "New Look" that I do like better). I feel that my original style was much more unique and individual and was much more the "real me." It had much more "zing and schmaltz" and I feel that any immortality that Batman enjoys came from my original style, that lasted about twenty years, and not the "New Look" style that is only a couple of years old, but improving all the time. I feel that the "New Look" lacks the individuality of my original style, although it is more illustrative and realistic (like everybody else). However, "In Rome, do as the Romans do" seems to be the motto, so at editorial request to me to "Keep up with the times," meaning follow the sheep who all draw alike (like Alex Raymond imitators), I conceded.

I have also read comments in your "Fanzine" about Infantino's art being better than mine on the "Batman" strip.

Let me put it this way: Infantino, I feel, is a better illustrator that I'd ever care to be, as I still try to combine a little of my old "semi-comic" style with the illustrative "New Look" style. I think Carmine is a very fine artist but does not capture the essence of "Batman" at all. On his own strips, he excels and he is almost too fine an artist, I feel, for the comic books. He should have been a top illustrator.

There is an old saying, "To the victor belongs the spoils," and after all is said and done about who does what on the Batman assembly line, and I do not underestimate all of the help I've received, I am assured that in the folklore of legendary comic history of our times, I know that Bob Kane will be remembered as the creator of "Batman" and no one else.

The trouble with being a "ghost" writer or artist is that you must remain rather anonymously without credit. However, if one wants the "credit," then one has to cease being a 'ghost" or follower and become a leader or innovator. (There must be a moral there somewhere for aspiring young cartoonists and writers.)

In conclusion, Biljo, I would like to say that I have some very excit-

Biljo White -5- September 14, 1965

ing news to report on the "Batman." First of all, the Batman is coming to television, and judging from your latest Batmania cover, you are either clairvoyant or heard the news through the grapevine.

ABC Television Network and 20th Century-Fox Films are jointly in the process now of making an extremely high-budget color pilot of an hour a week Batman series that may wind up as two half-hour-a-week shows. The show will be shown in a prime time slot at 7:30 and should hit the TV screens some time next September of 1966 season. This is a top budget show and they are putting the best of everything into it. They are building a special 'Batmobile" with a million gadgets on it that will make the "Goldfinger" car look like a kiddie car. They will have some of the villains that I created, The Joker, The Riddler, Catwoman, etc. This is going to be the "in" show to watch and will be real "camp" with some very exciting innovations and gimmicks which I would rather not reveal right now.

The time is now ripe for a Batman TV series, following on the heels of the James Bond hysteria, the Man from U.N.C.L.E. series, and various other satire take-offs. Did you know that I created "Batman" about ten years before Ian Fleming created James Bond?

It took them a while to catch on that "Batman" would be the greatest, but this year it seems, after celebrating 25 years of its fame, the "Batman" has had its biggest comeback and has had the accolades paid to me and the "Batman" from every source imaginable: Newsweek article, 'Batman Has Become a Collector's Item." The San Francisco Pop Ballet had a large 'Batman" back-drop. Honoring me, the first time a comic hero was used in a ballet. I received write-ups in various newspapers, Time Magazine, etc., etc. I am quite thrilled with all of this sudden, renewed interest in my indestructible heroes, and the TV series coming up will be the topper to it all. "Batman' has been acknowledged as a 'legend in my lifetime.

The second exciting news event worth mentioning is that I am planning a one-man art show of original Batman oil paintings that I will show in New York City at a new gallery in the Carlton House, called the Paul Stoneinoff Gallery, which will be held some time this coming November or December. I will let you know the exact date in advance, as soon as I find out, so that you can alert my fans who would like to attend the opening of this unprecedented show.

It will be kind of "Pop Art" but not really. The paintings are three-dimensional oils that are almost life-like in appearance. I am doing it partly for the Cancer Fund, and it will be a charity affair with a black-tie opening.

There will be all kinds of Batman and Robin shots, some in action, some in portrait, and also a liberal sprinkling of all of my villains: The

Even humor cartoonists rendered their versions of the Caped Crusader and his foe in Batmania.

Biljo White -6- September 14, 1965

Joker, Clayface, The Batwoman, The Catwoman, and The Penguin.

The prices of the paintings will be quite high, but I am counting on the rich patrons of "Pop Art" to buy them and I will personally autograph the catalogues for a very nominal fee, so that the younger set could afford them.

Well, Biljo, old chap, this sounds like my autobiography, but I thought that this would be a good time to sound off about myself, as I think that I have been silent too long about my views and opinions, and I have gotten a bit tired about hearing what people think I have said, along with misquotes and distortions of the truth.

As this is the first comprehensive document authored by myself, may I suggest that you keep this original copy so that the historians of comic folklore may one day think it valuable enough to lock in their vault. They can then quote excerpts about the real Bob Kane, instead of getting their information from second-hand sources which are genuinely false in context.

In the future, Biljo, I'd like you to know that I am making you kind of my unofficial guardian of pertinent Batmania folklore and oddities and may I suggest that if you ever want to get the facts straight about me or the Batman, please write to the original source, myself, for the truth, instead of second guessing. I will be most happy to help you and my fans in the future with any information that you may need.

So, good luck to you and all you Batman collectors, may I wish you continued success with your "Fanzine" Batmania and thanks again for your personal interest in my heroes and myself.

With best personal wishes,

Bob Kane

P.S. I would appreciate it if you would devote your next issue to my entire document and use all of the material that I have stated, as I feel that it is important enough to relate to my fans, once and for all, by being as candid and honest as I could. I am sure that this open letter will be welcomed by all my readers that have never heard any real comment about the personal side of Bob Kane, by Bob Kane.

Thanx again --

The next issue of Playboy Magazine will have a featured story about the comic book heroes and their creators of the "Golden Age" of comics by Julius Ffeifer. Look for it!

A Bob Kane illo from the New York "Seulingcon" program book, 1973

HERMAN KAHN, MANAGER

Bob Kane CARTOONIST
CREATOR OF
BATMAN AND ROBIN
DETECTIVE COMICS, INC.
480 LEXINGTON AVENUE
NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

Circa 1953. Biljo wrote to Bob Kane asking for advice and received a handwritten reply on Kane's Batman stationery. Batman & Robin ©1998 DC Comics

The news of the upcoming Batman television show hit 1965 comicdom like a bolt of lightning. The rumor mill ran rampant, and on January 12th, 1966, fans across the country gathered at their TVs (often visiting friends who owned color sets, which were not yet commonplace) to see "Hi Diddle Diddle," their first glimpse of Batman's amazing foray into prime time.

Suddenly BIFF! POW! ZAP! began appearing in media headlines, and the Batman craze was upon us. The TV and print news media were abruptly afloat with the word "Batmania," which they doubtless believed they had coined. Sales of the Caped Crusader's comics spiked (*Batman* even outsold *Superman* for a while, something it wouldn't do again until the 1990s.) Just as suddenly, the Bat-craze sent the circulation of Biljo White's *Batmania* into the stratosphere. Having begun with a respectable print run of 300 copies, it had burgeoned to over 750 by mid-1966 and showed no signs of abating.

The Fanzine Especially for Batman Fans was circulated internationally. "There were Batmanians in such Far Eastern countries as Australia, Thailand, and India, through England and Italy and so on," Biljo remembers. "Some of my *Batmania* material was reprinted in both England and Italy."

750 to 1000 copies may not seem like a large circulation in the grand scheme of things, but imagine if you had to print each and every page yourself on a mimeograph machine, assemble all the copies by hand, staple them, address them, affix stamps to them, and then cart them to the post office. No easy task! Though grateful for the enthusiasm of its large following after three years at the helm Biljo had tired of the demands of being "Batman's #1 fan."

With the 1967 *Batmania Annual* (#17), White ceased publication to take a well-deserved break. Thus ended a major chapter in the history of Batman Fandom, for no one else had the talent, time, and energy to step into the breach with quite the same flair and bravado. The writing, the artwork, and the attention to detail had all been strictly topnotch. Biljo had every right to be proud of it.

"*Batmania* was my best effort as a part of comicdom," he commented recently. "I believed my work on it should be regarded as a blueprint for producing a fanzine."

With Biljo's blessing, *Batmania* found new life at the hands of other editors over the next several years. It even graduated from mimeograph to professional photo-offset printing. The last issue under that name (#23) was published by Rich Morrissey in 1978. Then, when DC withdrew its permission to use the title, it ran still more issues under the name *Behind the Clock*, an allusion to the entrance to the Batcave.

How much are copies of *Batmania* worth? Today, these fanzines, with their print runs of under 1000 copies, can go for over $50 each for the earliest issues, and they aren't easy to find. Much of the material that was groundbreaking at the time is now common knowledge and the artwork (most often by White) is generally inspired by, if not traced from, the comics themselves. Still, Biljo White's way with a mimeograph stencil... the steadfast devotion given to Batman and Robin... and the view they give of the Dynamic Duo's career before he was even a glimmer in Neal Adams' eye—all make these simple little publications magical to read and re-read. *Batmania* is one of the central parts of any fanzine collection from comicdom's first golden decade.

White had done his job well. His magazine had focused the energy of fans of the Caped Crusader at a time when he was at an all-time low, and rallied support for Julius Schwartz' successful effort to resuscitate the strip. By the time the TV show had run its course, the Batman of the comic books had found new life, and soon would benefit by a further re-tooling. The era of Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams brought a welcome return to the days of Batman as an eerie creature of the night, very much as he had been originally envisioned by Bob Kane.

But that's always been Batman's lot: Continual renewal, development, and growth. Fans need never worry about the Darknight Detective becoming stale, for there will always be writers and artists with new visions of the strip, and fans to rally around in support. Such is the great, almost limitless potential of Batman.

Or, as we former Batmanians used to say: *"For Batman we accept nothing as impossible!"*

*[**Bill Schelly** is the author of* The Golden Age of Comic Fandom, *the first book-length history of comicdom's origins in the 1960s, which will be reissued in an expanded edition in March 1999. With Roy Thomas, Bill co-edited* Alter Ego: The Best of the Legendary Comics Fanzine, *the trade paperback reprinting (with new notes and commentary) the cream of the original fanzine issues of A/E, Volume 1.]*

Fin

Bob Kane
1916 • 1998

Just as this issue of Comic Book Artist and Alter Ego was going to press, we received the sad news of Bob Kane's passing on November 3, 1998. In his 1989 autobiography Batman & Me, written with Tom Andrae, Kane attempted to give his early collaborator Bill Finger something resembling his due, admitting that, "Bill never received the fame and recognition he deserved." Whatever the controversies that still surround the origins of the Darknight Detective, and without diminishing the contributions of others, especially Bill Finger, Kane was undeniably correct when he said in his 1965 letter to Biljo White: "In the folklore of legendary comic history of our times, I know that Bob Kane will be remembered as the creator of 'Batman,' and no one else." Batman is the second most famous super-hero created in the history of comic books, and Bob Kane deserves full and eternal credit for at least the initial concept.

"Hi! I'm Your Host, Tom Fagan!"

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MAN WHO LED THE PARADE

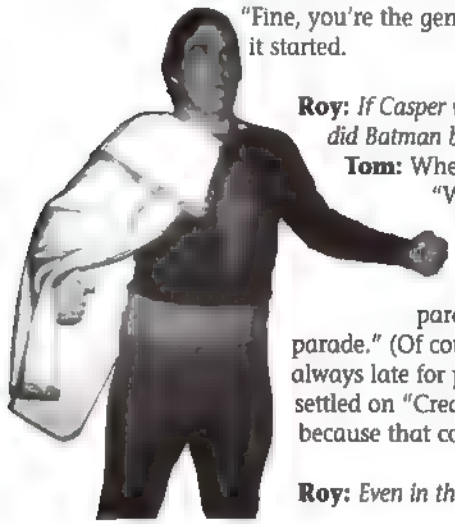
Conducted by Roy Thomas

Rutland, Vermont. Hardly a name that would seem destined to rank with Gotham City and Metropolis—and New York City, for that matter—as a mecca for super-heroes and super-villains... and for comic book professionals, as well. And yet, comics readers of a certain age may recall that, from 1970 through 1973, a total of seven stories in Marvel and DC comics were set on Halloween in this, the second largest city in that New England state. The "why" of that miniature phenomenon is one extraordinary fan of the comics—and Batman. All photos by Al Bradford. [The following interview was conducted by phone and transcribed by Jon B. Cooke.]

Tom Fagan played Batman in the Rutland parade from 1960-69. (Photo of Fagan and Sue O'Neil—as the Norse Goddess of Death, Hela.) Bottom left: Conventionmeister Phil Seuling as Captain Marvel.

Roy Thomas: *How did the Rutland parades get started?*
Tom Fagan: The Rutland Recreation Department had a parade in 1959. I was taking my daughter out trick-or-treating, and we heard a band playing, and saw these kids from the two city high schools dressed as hoboes, Indians, pirates, and all. In front of them was a Jeep with the recreation commissioner, the mayor, and a kid dressed as Casper the Friendly Ghost—he was the first comic book character to be in the Rutland parade.

The parade went down Center Street Hill and they lost half their number—then they made a right angle and went up another hill, and they lost the rest of them. The next day I went up to the recreation office and talked to Commissioner Chief Cioffredi (I always called him "Commissioner" because it fit in with Batman). I said that was kinda nice but I think it could be better. He said, "Fine, you're the general chairman." That's when it started.



Roy: *If Casper was the first comics parader, when did Batman begin to take part in it?*
Tom: When I spoke to Cioffredi, I said, "We should have a theme for this. Because it's Halloween and there are creatures of the night, you should have Batman as parade marshal to lead off the parade." (Of course, he never did because he was always late for parades and on the last float.) I settled on "Creatures of the Night" as the theme because that covered everything.

Roy: *Even in those pre-TV show days, Batman was still famous enough—everybody knew who Batman was.*
Tom: I also thought (being a Batman freak) that Batman should get the recognition, and anyway, I couldn't fill out a Superman costume.

Roy: *Were there any other comic book characters?*
Tom: In 1960 we had a Batman float We just had a picture of a disproportionate Batman with the comic seal of approval and, in the corner, "12¢." Another float featured Frankenstein, and that fit right in—Frankenstein had been in comics. My daughter was supposed to ride on the float with me as Belfry the Bat, but she didn't. We always got infants to play Bat-Mite. I remember being on the float as Batman, feeling really cool and thinking nobody would recognize me. But the cops came along and said, "Hi, Tom."

I wrote letters to *Detective Comics* (which Julie Schwartz edited) saying Batman was now the leader of the Rutland Halloween Parade and we were establishing a tradition. As a matter of fact, I would write a letter yearly and he would publish it. I was quite unaware if anybody was reading them, but they were, obviously.

Roy: *Did anybody show up from those letters or contact you?*
Tom: Not that I recall. Fandom was in its infancy at this point and I didn't realize there was this whole network of fans out there until Julie published your letter plugging *Alter Ego*. I got into fandom with Biljo White's *Komix Illustrated*, which included the first article I ever wrote—which was *not* about Batman but Ghost Rider. Soon, of course, I was also writing for Biljo's *Batmania*.

Roy: *1965 was the year you came to Dave Kaler's convention—as did I, as a brand new resident of New York and comic book professional. You were writing for Charlton, as I had done and as Dave was doing. You invited Dave and me to the Halloween parade. Dave took part in his Dr. Strange costume and I was in the Plastic Man one my aunt had made me for the convention, right before I moved to New York. Were there any other comic book characters besides them and Batman in that year's parade?*
Tom: We had a number of Bat-people: Batwoman, Batgirl, Bat-Mite, and all of the Bat family. The Batfloat had a big blow-up of Plastic Man coming out of a jack-in-the-box from a *Police Comics* cover, and a blow-up of Dr. Strange. I told you I wanted to have that float sponsored by *Alter Ego*, so we got some Magic Markers and drew the Alter Ego mask on the back of the truck. People recognized Plastic Man and were yelling, "Plastic Man! Plastic Man!"

Near right: After appearing as Batman in ten Rutland parades, Fagan appeared as the Marvel hero/villain Nighthawk in 1970 in homage to Tom's appearance in Avengers *#83 Far right: Andy Yanchus, DC colorist, as Man-Bat Bottom right: An unknown reveler dressed as Luke Cage, Hero for Hire.*

Roy: *I remember I was surprised Plas was recognized. Tell us about those fabled Rutland Halloween parties.*
Tom: At first they were held in an old Victorian house at 73 Pine Street, which suited the atmosphere greatly. '65 was the year we went out pumpkin-pilfering, carting 110 pumpkins and loading them up. We built a coffin to throw beer cans in—which worked wonders! We didn't have a single thing to pick up, and we had 200 to 300 people there!

Roy: *I mostly remember the party—standing amid a packed crowd, talking to people, having a drink—the noise level was high. And every so often I would hear snatches of Barry McGuire's hit record "Eve of Destruction," playing over and over: "Think of all the hate there is in Red China," and "You don't believe we're on the eve of destruction"! I've never been able to hear that song since—even years later as Muzak in a supermarket, believe it or not—without thinking back to that party*

You said—I can't recall it—I was out there painting a float, while Dave was—
Tom: You were being a dilettante while Dave had to finish his assignment for Charlton. That was the weekend he created Nightshade.

Roy: *Oh, I remember it now! I was doing some last-minute painting on a piece of a float right next to the house—I was outside all alone, and my hands were freezing, because it gets cold in Vermont in late October—and suddenly I think, "What am I doing out here?" You sold some stories to Charlton at that time, too, though unfortunately the comics all died before they got published.*
Tom: I did *Son of Vulcan* and *Captain Atom*. Just my luck.

Roy: *It was funny that you, Dave, and I were the three guys on that float as super-heroes, and the big break for all three of us had been writing stories for Charlton for $4 a page! Like Sinatra sang on TV that fall, 1965 was "a very good year."*
Tom: It was a good year, and I'm sure I wrote that parade up for one of the fanzines.

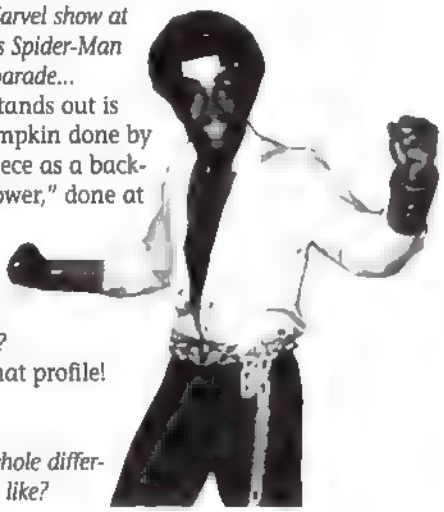
Roy: *But over the next 2-3 years, the parade only slowly grew to attract comics people.*
Tom: I would go to Phil Seuling's cons, and people would ask me about the parades because they had seen my letters in DC comics. I moved into what was called the Old Mansion—the Clement House, which had once been the governor's mansion. It was a place we hung out at because I was a reporter at the *Rutland Herald* and John Clement, who was 60 years old, was the city editor. John Clement got killed and people were breaking into the house, so I offered to take care of the place to prevent vandalism and theft. What I thought was going to be like a month stay lasted from 1968 until November 2, 1972!

Here was the perfect place for a party! There was just my wife, my daughter, two dogs, and me in this huge, huge house. Wow! There's one thing I had always wanted, and that was to throw a big party. I felt that people who worked on the parade did an awful lot of work and didn't get anything but a thank-you note, and I thought we should have a party for them afterwards—so since we couldn't get the Recreation Department to do it, we did it first at 73 Pine Street. Then, after we moved into the Old House, we did it on a regular basis.

Roy: *People really got into the spirit of things.*
Tom: Oh, yeah. And it just kept growing! I remember that in '68 the doorbell started ringing at 12 o'clock and just kept ringing, and in came all the people I had invited. Tom Watkins was one of the first—he came as Wonder Warthog. They would come in costume after the parade. Then the TISOS people would show up—The Illegitimate Sons of Superman.

Roy: *Marv Wolfman, Len Wein, Mark Hanerfeld...*
Tom: Andy Yanchus, Rich Rubenfeld, the Vartanoff girls, Irene and Ellen. I was a member of that group, too, courtesy of meeting those people at the Seuling con. I formed my own group called the SOBs—the Sons of Batman. They showed up, and then came the weekend and you just wouldn't believe it: People just kept coming! There were all sorts of minor tragedies before the parade, like one year when Andy Yanchus had a beautiful Man-Bat costume and broke a rib in one of the wings—he was practically in tears before Mark Hanerfeld casually repaired it. And you came once in a professionally made Spider-Man costume. You left behind a bootie, which we found.

Roy: *That costume was one of several made for a Macy's Thanksgiving parade—in '64, I think it was. Fabulous Flo Steinberg [Stan's corresponding secretary] told me Marvel had these costumes made—Spider-Man, Thor, a Fantastic Four one. Some actors were hired to wear them in the parade. But supposedly Marvel paid the actors in advance, and they got drunk and never showed up for the parade! [Laughter] So these costumes were lying around and I took them home to save them. They were all worn on stage in the Marvel show at Carnegie Hall in January 1972. I was Spider-Man there, too. But, back to the Rutland parade...*
Tom: I think of the floats. What stands out is Batman and Batgirl holding a pumpkin done by Jim Steranko. It was a beautiful piece as a backdrop. We had one that was "Batpower," done at the time of the flower children with Flower Power.



Roy: *After the Batman TV show got on, did that give you a higher profile?*
Tom: Oh, yeah, but I didn't *like* that profile! [Laughs]

Roy: *Then you had to live down a whole different image of Batman that you didn't like?*

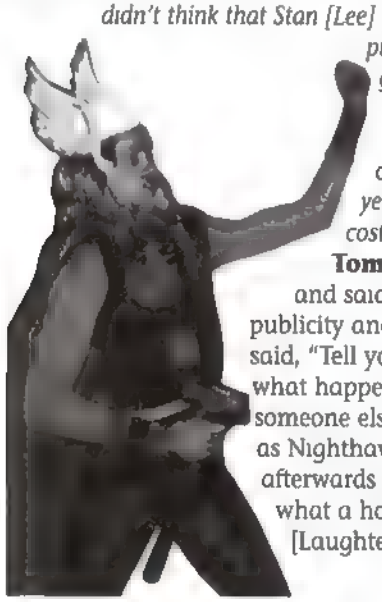
Left: Fan Tom Hegeman in the official "Hi! I'm Your Host, Tom Fagan!" T-shirt (1973)—lifting a line from Batman *#237. Middle: Elfquest the Prequel Wendy and Richard Pini as Crystal and the Vision (1973). Right: Andy Yanchus as Man-Bat on a balcony of the legendary Clement Mansion. Bottom left, Peter Bradford as Thor (1971).*

Tom: He was a clown on TV and I never thought of Batman as a clown. I was awfully glad when they returned him to his roots.

Roy: *Dave and I and a few others were coming up to Rutland from 1965 on, but somehow the parade never made it into the wonderful world of professional comic books till after the 1969 parade, when I decided to set a story there. I wrote the "Lady Liberators" story in* Avengers *#83, in which I gave you, me, and my first wife Jeanie a few lines.*
Tom: There was some artist that griped to Marv Wolfman, saying, "That Roy Thomas—all he wants to do is have stories that have him and his friends drawn into it!"

Roy: *What's funny is how little I put myself, Jeanie, and you into that story. There was a little bit more in the next one,* Marvel Feature *#2, the second Defenders story. Later, when the other Rutland stories came along, Alan Weiss, Len Wein, and others were in practically every panel, running all over the place. Not that I minded—those stories were fun.*
Tom: There was Denny [O'Neil] in his cowboy hat and glasses in the story he wrote...

Roy: *It's always "self-aggrandizement" when someone you don't approve of is doing something. One of the problems I had in that 1970* Avengers *was that I wanted to have John Buscema draw you in costume, but you always wore a* Batman *outfit! Even if we could've gotten away with it, I didn't think that Stan [Lee] and Martin Goodman [Marvel's publisher] would have wanted to risk getting an angry letter from DC. So I had you attired as Nighthawk, a character I'd designed as a parody of Batman—and later that very year, you did wear a Nighthawk costume!*



Tom: Alan Weiss came up to me and said, "Marvel gives you all this publicity and yet you still do Batman." I said, "Tell you what—why don't you see what happens at the parade tonight?" I had someone else play Batman, but there I was as Nighthawk. Len Wein came up to me afterwards and said, "Great costume, but what a horrible nose!" It was a *beak!* [Laughter]

Roy: *Then there was the Defenders story in 1971, which of course reflected the 1970 parade and party....*
Tom: That's the famous story with the Sub-Mariner swimming up Otter Creek and eating mussels. I thought that was so great!

Roy: *Another thing in that story was the happy circumstances that there actually was a mountain in Vermont called Bald Mountain. I could use the title "Nightmare on Bald Mountain" and really make something of it that had a nice spooky atmosphere.*
Tom: Not only that, but we also had a phenomenon: In the 1920s, '30s, and '40s (they seemed to be on a ten-year cycle), there were these mysterious lights—no one has ever figured out what they were.

Roy: *I had Ross Andru draw a nine-panel page just showing Jeanie and me listening in rapt attention as you were talking about all these things that had happened. I was looking over that story recently, and I knew I didn't make up all that stuff—"Tom must've told me the whole thing."*
Tom: When you expressed an interest in Bald Mountain, I checked with older people and I found out about it. When it happened, it happened for about a week and a half—the whole mountain would be in this red glow. There was another thing that we tossed in there, which didn't deal with Halloween but with Walpurgis Night. We were great for parties on odd days, and we held a Walpurgis Night party at an abandoned stone quarry on Pine Hill.

Roy: *You New Englanders are weird!*
Tom: *Ayuh!* And we're proud of it! Someone had written on the wall, "Cthulhu Rules!" and I had my picture taken near that. That showed up in one of the stories, too.

Roy: *That same year came "The Night of the Reaper" in* Batman. *Do you remember how that one came about?*
Tom: Denny was up with Bernie Wrightson. Clement House had 23 acres plus a dammed area where people went swimming (which figured into the story). One of the decorations that we had put up was a cupola with a blinking red light with an eagle that masqueraded as a bat, blinking on and off. Denny, Bernie, and others were out at the dam and they could see this blinking on and off, and they were talking about, "What if there was a madman loose? What if the light was used as a signal?" That's how Denny came up with the idea. Sol Harrison [DC production manager] sent his son up here to take pictures so Neal could work from actual photos. (The

Left: Len Wein as Morbius the Living Vampire (1972). Middle: Marv Wolfman as Aquaman and Tom Watkins as Solomon Grundy (1970) Right. Tom Fagan paints a Rutland float backdrop in 1970, as Marty Greim leans a Steranko blow-up against a wall. Bottom right. Unknown sorceress dressed as the Scarlet Witch.

story was late because someone stole Neal's portfolio, and I guess he had to do several of the pages over.) All of those pictures are genuine: The staircase, the front of the house, the cupola with the lights.

Roy: *I didn't have the staff to take pictures—we just had to fake it! [Laughs] So those were the first three Rutland stories. Then in '72 there were* three *stories—two at Marvel and one at DC. If you read all three, they actually fit together.*
Tom: They did, and that was quite an engineering feat. I think that all the DC and Marvel people running around in those stories weren't pointed out to those in charge.

Roy: *Well, the editor-in-chief at Marvel in '72 would have been* me! *So, unless Stan complained...*
Tom: In a way, those were the first crossovers in comics!

Roy: *Yeah. I decided not to do any more after those first two, but I was glad to see other people do them. They seemed to work out pretty well.*
Tom: Steve Englehart did one of those stories...

Roy: *It's his car they're running around in, because he lived up in Connecticut then.*
Tom: I remember it was failing at all the turns.

Roy: *They used it in the story that way.*
Tom: Steve had a girl in White River Junction at the time, so he had a vested interest in Vermont. He'd come up and be part of it. '72 was the last party at Clement House. Then we moved over to Rotary Field.

Roy: *'72 was my last trip to Rutland, too. I remember it well because I drove up there in a rented car with Gerry Conway, his fiancee Carla, and Jeanie. We came back on Sunday, it was raining like hell, and I get home and collapse on the bed and I'm sprawled out when Jeanie comes in and tells me she's decided to leave me. [Laughs] That was the capstone to my Rutland parades. But happily the parades went on without me...*
Tom: One year one of the pros brought the movie "The Incredible Shrinking Man" and they were showing it in the living room of the house. Here were all these people crammed in to see this old movie and they thought it was the most wonderful thing going! They were all like little kids! The people from New York went crazy over the dam and climbing trees, running around....
Roy: *They were city boys out in the country! I grew up in a small town and spent lots of weekends at my grandparents' farms, but these city boys never got out to the countryside at any other time!*
Tom: Then there was the incident where three high school kids crashed one of the parties. I went out and said, "Hey, you weren't invited," and they said, "Yes, we were!" I said, "I would really appreciate it if you leave now," and all of a sudden they said, "Yessir!" and they took off. Then I realized that behind me was the Red Skull with an auto jack, Alfred the butler, and the Joker!

That first party at Rotary Field, in 1973—that's the one that ended up in *Penthouse.*

Roy: *Penthouse?*
Tom: There was this guy walking around, wearing glasses and saying he was Clark Kent. When people asked him why he wasn't in costume, he opened his shirt and he had a Superman shirt on underneath. Turned out he was a reporter for *Penthouse*, and an article on the parade and the party appeared in it. I have no idea *why.*

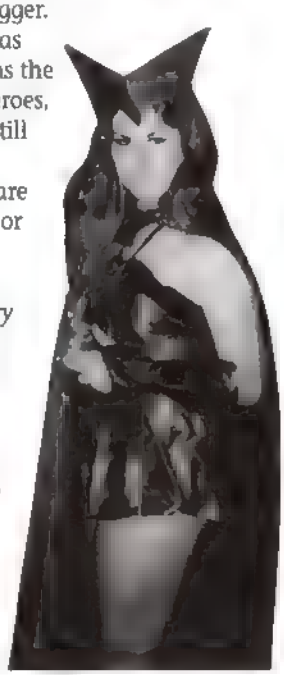
In 1974 the party was held in an abandoned church, with Cthulhu in the altar space. In '75 it was in the old recreation center, and that was kind of a disaster. After that, the parties ceased but the parades continued. They just got bigger and bigger.

One year there was a whole band dressed as Batman—another year a whole band dressed as the Pink Panther. There were less and less super-heroes, but there were Disney floats and the like—all still comic-oriented.

In fact, the parades continue today. They are one of the biggest events in Rutland, believe it or not. It's a legacy I'm kind of proud of.

Roy: *You should be, Tom. They're a happy memory for a whole bunch of people.*

*[***NOTE:** *More Al Bradford photos of Rutland Halloweens will be seen in the forthcoming revised edition of* The Golden Age of Comic Fandom *by Bill Schelly, from Hamster Press. And check out Carl Gafford's article on the funnybook side of Rutland—just turn the page!]*



Once Upon a Halloween...

WHEN COMIC PROS BEAT A PATH TO RUTLAND, VERMONT

by Carl (the Gaff) Gafford

Comics often have holiday themes and/or deal with actual events, so it should hardly come as a surprise that, from 1970 to 1973, the real-life annual Halloween Parade in Rutland, Vermont, discussed in the preceding interview with Tom Fagan, made appearances in both Marvel and DC comics. *Seven* of them, altogether. And those stories spotlight a high concentration of comics pros in everything from cameos to featured roles!

THE AVENGERS
BLACK WIDOW
MEDUSA!
ALL RIGHT, GIRLS... THAT FINISHES OFF THOSE MALE CHAUVINIST PIGS!
FROM NOW ON, IT'S THE VALKYRIE AND HERLADY LIBERATORS!

Avengers #83.

Writer Roy Thomas got the ball rolling in *Avengers* #83 (Dec. 1970), at the height of the "Relevance Craze" in comics, in his story "Come On In... the Revolution's Fine!" drawn by John Buscema and Tom Palmer.

Four Avengers—in Rutland to bodyguard a local scientist—drop by the Halloween party hosted by parade chairman Tom Fagan, who greets them garbed as Nighthawk. (In real life, Fagan at that time presided over parades as Batman; but in a Marvel comic Roy opted to utilize the Batman equivalent he'd designed for the Squadron Supreme.) Tom promptly introduces the Avengers to out-of-towners Roy and Jean Thomas. Roy was generous enough to give his then-wife the punchline [see illo].

The Rutland parade is soon attacked (for the first but far from the last time) by the Masters of Evil—then by the Liberators, several female Avengers led astray by a new villainess, the Valkyrie—who turns out to be the Enchantress. Both groups are after the scientist's Parallel-Time Projector. Naturally, in the end, they don't get it.

Rutland made its next appearance in 1971, in the second Defenders story (*Marvel Feature* #2, March 1972; "Nightmare on Bald Mountain"); this time Roy was abetted by artists Ross Andru and Sal Buscema. Since Rutland lies in the shadow of a very real Bald Mountain, Tom relates its mysterious past to an awed Roy and Jean Thomas.

Ere long, as the 12th annual Rutland Halloween Parade goes on, Dr. Strange, the Hulk, and Sub-Mariner are battling Dormammu and his hooded cultists to a standstill that closes the rift between the dimensions (and practically blows off the top of Bald Mountain).

This year, however, it wasn't only Marvel heroes who dropped in unexpectedly on the Rutland festivities. So did DC's Caped Crusader, in "Night of the Reaper" (*Batman* #237, Dec. 1971) by writer Denny O'Neil and artists Neal Adams and Dick Giordano.

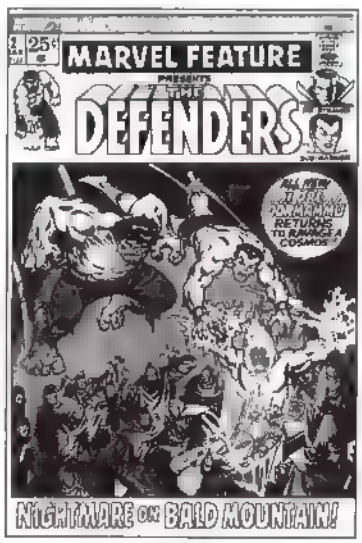
NEVER MIND, DEAD BEATS! JUDGING BY THE GLOVED HAND THAT JUST REACHED THRU AND UNLOCKED THE DOOR
I THINK IT'S SAFE TO SAY --THE AVENGERS HAVE LANDED!
OR, TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY - BREAK OUT THE DR. PEPPER!
GREETINGS, PEOPLE! I'M YOUR HOODED HOST TOM FAGAN--OR AT LEAST I WILL BE, SOON AS I PUT ON MY SPECS!
GOOD EVEN NG MR. FAGAN BUT WHY IS YOUR COSTUME THAT OF NIGHTHAWK..
A SUPER VILLAIN?
WELL, HE'S A CREATURE OF THE NIGHT! THAT'S WHAT HALLOWEEN'S ALL ABOUT RIGHT?
AND THE NAME IS TOM!
OH, BY THE WAY-- THE OUT-OF-TOWNERS DRESSED AS SP DER-MAN AND MRS FANTASTIC ARE ROY AND JEANIE THOMAS!
THEY CAME ALL THE WAY FROM FROM THE B G BAD CITY FOR RUTLAND'S ELEVENTH HALLOWEEN PARADE!
THE AVENGERS! OH WOW!
WHICH ONE OF YOU IS MRS. PEEL?
COOL IT K.O.!
I'M ONLY SORRY TOM, THAT WE'RE NOT HERE FOR PURELY SOCIAL REASONS!
STILL, I HOPE THE RUMORS WE HEARD CONCERNING A KIDNAP PLOT WERE UNFOUNDED!
I'LL DRINK TO THAT! NOW WE'D BETTER GET CRACKING

Tom Fagan, Roy & Jeanie Thomas make their four-color debut. From Avengers #83.

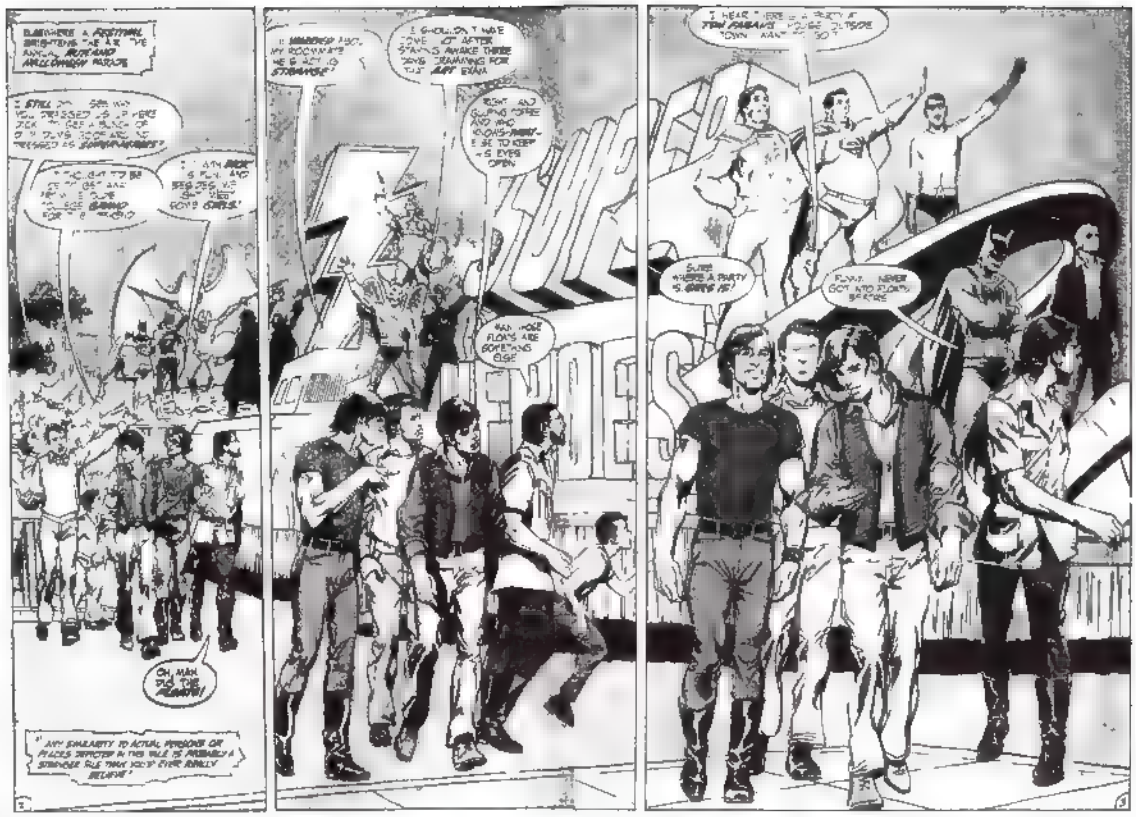
Dick (then Robin) Grayson makes the Halloween scene with buddies Gerry Conway, Bernie Wrightson, and Alan Weiss (all of whom were writing or drawing for DC at the time). Artist Adams drew revelers on the parade floats in actual DC *and Marvel* costumes, including his own recently-designed Havok.

Batman comes to Rutland looking for escaped Nazi Colonel Kurt "The Butcher" Schloss, a notorious World War Two concentration camp commandant, having been tipped off by a physician named Dr. Gruener, a survivor of Schloss' camp. For the first time, the "real" Batman meets party host Tom Fagan (in *Batman* garb here, this being a DC comic). Also present are Denny O'Neil, and Len Wein and Mark Hanerfeld (as *House of Mystery/Secret* hosts Cain and Abel). Most if not all DC personnel in this story had come to Vermont in '71; since these issues came out circa Halloween, each Rutland tale tended to reflect the previous year's festivities.

Eventually, the Nazis are captured and the deadly Reaper is unmasked—Dr. Gruener, seeking



Marvel Feature #2.



Written by Denny O'Neil, Batman #237 was based on an idea by Bernie Wrightson (with an assist by Harlan Ellison) and features spectacular Neal Adams art. (By the way, that big thunderbolt-impaled-in-a-base on the float in the background is an oversize copy of the Shazam award given out in the early '70s by ACBA, the pros' own short-lived Academy of Comic Book Arts!)

personal vengeance on Schloss. The Reaper is about to slice and dice a fallen Alan Weiss, when he spies an artifact of Alan's caught in his scythe: A Star of David. Gruener realizes he's become the very evil he sought to destroy, and stumbles dazed off a very real dam to his death.

Halloween *1972* had no less than *three* Rutland appearances weaving through the two major companies: Beginning in *Amazing Adventures* #16 (with The Beast), jumping cross-company into *Justice League of America* #103, then concluding in *Thor* #207. (One could read the DC middle chapter separate from the two Marvels, but they actually made up one complete story.)

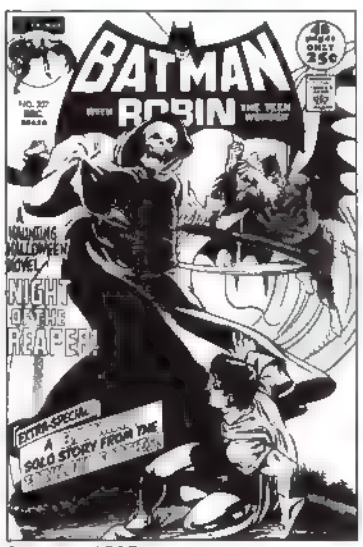
AA #16's, "And the *Juggernaut* Will Get You... If You Don't Watch Out!" from writer Steve Englehart and artists Bob Brown and Frank McLaughlin, opens with a beat-up old Mustang bearing owner Englehart, Len and (first wife) Glynis Wein, and Gerry Conway to Rutland. As Hank McCoy, the Beast and his friend Vera bum a ride—while in the background the Juggernaut reappears in this dimension.

Amazing Adventures *#16.*

The young people head for Fagan's mansion, where Glynis dons a "Powergirl" costume (the Marvel equivalent of a Supergirl outfit; DC's Power Girl wasn't created till the mid-'70s). The Juggernaut crashes the party. (The previous year's battle between Dr. Strange and Dormammu had weakened the dimension walls enough for Juggy to return to Earth.) When the Beast manages to yank off his power-bestowing helmet, the weakened Mr. J. tries to steal Steve's car (he won't be the only one tonight), but it won't start. Catching up, the Beast sees that, because time moved differently in the dimension where Juggy has been, he has turned into an old man.

The story ends with the Beast alone in the cold, dark night—which is also where his series ends, as this was the Beast's finale in *Amazing Adventures.*

Justice League of America #103's title, "A Stranger Walks among Us!" by writer Len Wein and artists Dick Dillin and Dick Giordano,



Batman *#237*

refers to the Phantom Stranger (who opens the story), and not Tom Fagan (who by now is no stranger). The Stranger alerts six JLAers that their old foe Felix Faust plans to open a dimensional gate at Rutland to bring forth dark demons. (Doesn't he know that trick *never* works?) Meanwhile, Steve Englehart and Gerry Conway pick up the muffler from Steve's old Mustang, while Len and Glynis Wein watch. Glynis soon goes missing. (This story occurs between *Amazing Adventures* #16 and *Thor* #207.)

The JLAers decide to use the Clement house as a local base of operations. Batman introduces his super-friends to Tom, and before you can say "Grand Marshal," our heroes are leading Rutland's 13th annual Halloween Parade! Felix Faust causes the floats to vanish, puts the crowd in a trance, and is about to cast a spell to kill the comatose JLAers, when they're saved by the Phantom Stranger.

Trying to flee, Faust steals Steve's car. Not far down the road the police pull him over. Faust surrenders and confesses, thinking his infamy has identified him—but the cops had only pulled him over to give him a ticket for the faulty muffler on Steve's crate!

Thor #207's "Firesword" by writer Gerry Conway and artists John Buscema and Vince Colletta is perhaps the weakest Rutland story, coming as it does in the middle of an ongoing *Thor* story arc.

After the parade, our friends Steve, Gerry, Len, and Glynis pile into Steve's bucket of bolts and head for Tom Fagan's house, where their genial host (garbed as Nighthawk again) seems glassy-eyed and vague. A shadowy figure in the house has Tom under his spell!

Back in the Vermont woods, Thor has landed with the saintly Sif and the hefty Hildegarde in pursuit of Crusher Creel, the Absorbing Man. What's more, Loki soon pops up, having harnessed

Justice League of America *#103.*

the souls of mesmerized paraders (including Tom and Glynis) to power his ominous Firesword. Karnilla the Norn Queen appears and, making an unholy bargain with with Sif, helps Thor defeat the Absorbing Man—and renders Loki blind just for good measure!

Back at the house, our comics friends react when someone (we know it's Felix Faust, even if this is a Marvel mag) makes off with Steve's rattletrap. The tale ends with Sif having left with Karnilla, and Hildegarde sobbing to Thor that they may never see either again. TO BE CONTINUED. (Of course. They always are.)

The "Rutland stories," however, had nearly run their course, for reasons no one can say with certainty. Steve Englehart did a lone sortie the next year (*Avengers* #119, Jan. 1974), which found Tom Fagan again greeting visiting heroes in his Nighthawk costume. Only, it wasn't really Tom at all, but the Collector, back for another try at adding the Avengers to his mantlepiece. No comics pros appeared in this tale, however. At story's end, Loki, reduced to the mental state of a child, was left in Rutland, to be looked over by Tom and his fellow Vermonters.

And that was the end of the Rutland stories from Marvel and/or DC—though there *was* one latter-day Rutland tale by Martin Greim in his alternative comic *Thunder Bunny.*

Thor *#207.*

Whether it was changing comics administrations or simply that the novelty had worn off, after 1973 the two major companies said goodbye to visits to the rustic Vermont woods on All Hallows' Eve. It's been said that in the mid-'70s Marv Wolfman (or somebody) decided to throw a party in New York on Halloween, and maybe that helped bring an end to the pros' northward annual treks.

But they were great while they lasted.

A personal postscript: I attended the 1972 Rutland Halloween party (which, for reasons that escape my greying memory, was held on the weekend *before* the actual parade). Among others I ran into there were Richard and Wendy Pini (who went on to fame in the fantasy field), and Dave Cockrum, who regaled us with accounts of his efforts to revive the Legion of Super-Heroes. I was dressed as Vaughn Bode's Cheech Wizard, and the Pinis were Green Arrow and the Black Canary.

THE STAGE IS SET-- BUT OUR CAST IS NOT YET COMPLETE...
I DON'T BELIEVE IT! THE WHOLE FREAKIN' MUFFLER FELL OFF!
...WE FIND THE REMAINING FOUR PLAYERS ON A LONELY VERMONT ROADSIDE LATE THIS SAME AFTERNOON...
STEVE -- I TOLD YOU THIS CRATE WOULDN'T LAST ALL THE WAY TO RUTLAND!
IT'S THE STORY OF MY LIFE! WE'LL NEVER GET TO FAGAN'S ON TIME AT THIS RATE!
I'M STILL NOT SURE I EVEN WANT TO GO TO FAGAN'S, LEN! AFTER ALL THE HASSLES I HAD AT THE PARTY THERE LAST YEAR!--!
*EDITOR'S NOTE: "NIGHT OF THE REAPER"-- BATMAN #237!
GARBAGE! IF YOU DIDN'T WANT TO COME, GERRY, YOU WOULDN'T BE HERE!
BESIDES--YOU'RE THE ONE WHO CONVINCED US WHAT A GREAT TIME WE'D HAVE!
WAITAMINNIT! SQUABBLING ISN'T GONNA GET US ANYWHERE! SAVE YOUR ENERGY FOR THE PARADE, GLYNIS--
CONSIDERING THE SUPERGIRL COSTUME YOU'LL BE WEARING YOU'LL NEED ALL THE ENERGY YOU GET-- TO KEEP WARM!
HEY DON'T HASSLE MY CAR PEOPLE! IT'S TRYING TO GET US TO THE PARADE!
--AND IT WILL-- IF WE DON'T LET IT SIT TOO LONG!
BBRRAAKKK
WHROOMM
BBLLLATTTT
KAAK
KAAK
BOY, WILL TOM FAGAN BE SURPRISED WHEN HE SEES US!

Steve Englehart, Gerry Conway, Len and Glynis Wein suffer through three issues (spanning two comic publishing outfits) of car trouble in their 1972 trip to Rutland to attend the Halloween parade. This episode is from JLA *#103*

One guy at the party was dressed as the Hulk and used green vegetable dye for the skin tone (preceding John Belushi's rendition with the same media); but when it started to rain, the drops dried on him like little bits of dark green acne! "The madder Hulk gets, the more Hulk's skin breaks out!"

A good time was had by all. Thanks, Tom, for making it all possible, and for sharing it with us and the rest of the comics-reading public.

*[***Carl Gafford** *has worked in comics as colorist and production worker since the 1970s, when he was one of the original "Junior Woodchucks" at DC Comics. He wants especially to thank Minnesota's Nostalgia Zone for reference material for this piece. A longer version of this article appeared in the apa-zine CAPA-Alpha.]*

Neal Adams' thumbnails from pages 20-23 of "Night of the Reaper" (which takes place in Rutland, Vermont during the Halloween festivities) that appeared in Batman *#237. Look for Vanguard Press'* Neal Adams: The Sketch Book *(as annotated and designed by Arlen Schumer) in Spring 1999. Batman ©1998 DC Comics*

Thunder Over Hollywood

CAPTAIN THUNDER AND BLUE BOLT, OF ALL PEOPLE, IN TINSELTOWN

by Roy Thomas

He could've been a contender.

In fact, he *was*.

Captain Thunder, I mean.

Not to mention his son, Blue Bolt.

Back in 1986, with my six years of DC nigh-exclusivity coming to an end, hard on the heels of fifteen years of Marvel exclusivity, I felt it was finally time to see about launching a few creator-owned projects. Much as I'd loved laboring in the vineyards of Marvel and DC since '65, I'd been a bit envious of those who wrote and/or drew comics heroes whose destinies they could control.

Don't get me wrong: I was grateful that Red Sonja Properties, Inc., had given me a percentage interest in the She-Devil with a Sword I had developed (and I'd done okay out of it when the movie came out, bomb though it was); and it was nice to own a financial stake in DC books like *Arak/Son of Thunder, Infinity, Inc., Jonni Thunder a.k.a. Thunderbolt, Captain Carrot and His Amazing Zoo Crew!*, etc.

Still, I'd had no control over who scripted the Red Sonja movie (though, admittedly, Gerry Conway and I *had* turned down our chance to write a draft of it), or how Captain Carrot was developed for TV animation (it had gotten as far as a bible and a pilot script, anyway). And, with DC owned by Warner, my agent and I couldn't exactly take *Arak, Son of Thunder* to Paramount or Disney!

E.R. Cruz' pencils for a not-yet-used cover of Captain Thunder and Blue Bolt. *©1998 Roy & Dann Thomas.*

Thus, in 1986, at the behest of Mike Gold, I developed a super-hero named *Alter Ego* (how *did* I think that one up?) for First Comics.

And, soon afterward, Dennis Mallonee, whom I had known for several years, invited my wife Dann and me to create a super-hero for his new Hero Comics line. We jumped at the chance, and ere long *Captain Thunder and Blue Bolt* was born.

CT&BB was more Dann's concept than mine, but that really didn't matter; what I didn't create as a writer I'd help shape as a *de facto* unofficial co-editor (with publisher Dennis as line editor, of course). She had this idea about a father-and-son super-hero team, with emphasis on the generation gap. There'd been touches of that in the past with Batman and Robin, of course, but this was the real thing—an actual parent-and-child situation.

If that exact thing had been done before, I hadn't noticed it. And no, I don't count "Yank and Doodle, with the Black Owl" in the old *Prize Comics*—the twins' dad only became a masked hero late in his sons' masked careers, after the original Black Owl had died—and anyway there wasn't much cross-generational conflict in Golden Age comics, not even in *Batman* or *Captain America* or *Cat-Man* or "Mr. Scarlet" or any of the other zillions of 1940s comics in which unmarried men ran around with teenage wards. Comic book kids knew their place in the 1940s.

Anyway, at a meeting at our San Pedro, California, digs with Dennis, my comics agent Mike Friedrich, and Dell Barras, whom Dennis had suggested as artist, things were quickly settled and the beginnings of the costumes were designed. I wanted the father to be in red and yellow, and the son in shades of blue; they would shoot lightning bolts of yellow and blue, respectively.

For names, I took two monickers I liked that were lying around unused. "Captain Thunder" had been tried first in *Jungle Comics* (where his first name was Terry, and he was in the Foreign Legion) and, as everyone knows, had almost been the name of the original Captain Marvel. The first Blue Bolt had been a short-lived Simon & Kirby hero circa 1940, though the name lived on as the title of a comic for years after the actual character was dropped. The pairing of names as *Captain Thunder and Blue Bolt* sounded perfect to me (if not necessarily to Dann) the moment I said them.

CT&BB had a minor, checkered career, and this isn't the place to

The generation gap closes with a vengeance, in CT&BB *#2 ©1998 Roy & Dann Thomas; artwork by Dell Barras.*

dwell on it. The late '80s wasn't the best time for starting up a new small comics company, though Dennis and Hero Publishing gallantly struggled along for some time. (And indeed, Hero Publishing still exists; see below.) There were eight issues of *CT&BB* between September 1987 and September 1988, then two more black-and-white issues in 1992. We even came within one issue of finishing the original framing-and-revenge storyline. (We'll do it yet!)

By the time of those two 1992 issues, however, a new factor had entered the equation:

Hollywood.

My movie/TV agent Dan Ostroff, who over the years has had a hand in a number of comics-derived film deals, fell in love with *Captain Thunder*. He made it abundantly clear that, of the various comics I'd written or co-written since the early 1980s when he represented Gerry Conway and me, this was the one whose writing he liked best, by far.

Which was all very well and good—even though it was Dann who basically controlled the direction of the book and did the first draft of each script; I contributed co-plotting, general guidance, working with the artists and letterers—and slightly rewriting Dann's scripts, this latter task often accompanied by knock-down arguments between the two of us.

Sometime in the very early '90s, Dan (one "n"—that's the agent, remember) decided that, come hell or high water, he was going to sell *Captain Thunder and Blue Bolt* as a movie.

In retrospect, it seems like it took him all of fifteen minutes.

Dan had a nibble or two—then a very positive bite from a big-name film producer, who had credentials going back more than a decade and was still very actively producing; he was definitely not one of the Over-the-Hill Gang. Dann and I had seen his most recent films and had liked both the movies, and the fact that they were a bit offbeat, not quite the usual Hollywood fare.

(An aside: I'm not trying to be coy in not mentioning his name in this article; quite a few people know who he is, as the deal was announced in *Daily Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter*, and was later listed in some comics-related magazines. But I'd prefer not to name him here—and *not* because I feel any less respect for him now than I felt then.)

When I talked with him over the phone, the Producer seemed to understand what we, too, thought was good and fairly original about the series—the father-vs.-son conflict, two generations of super-heroes forced to work together and gradually coming to a grudging respect, even love, for each other.

The Producer made it clear that he was interested only in the first three issues, that everything he had been interested in buying was in *CT&BB* #1-3: The set-up, in which a recent high school grad goes searching for his long-disappeared father and discovers that Dad was/is a once-famous super-hero named Captain Thunder, only to wind up as a brand new super-hero himself, soon christened Blue Bolt. #3's origin story pretty much capped off what the Producer cared about, even though at that point father and son set off around the world looking for the bastards who framed CT all those years ago.

The Producer was canny, though. Almost immediately, with the deal agreed to in principle, he got a major studio (let's call it the Big Studio—not its real name) to option the property for him to produce. A cardinal producers' rule in Hollywood: Whenever possible, use somebody else's money.

Actually, Dan, Dann, and I were very happy with this turn of events. From past experience in selling seven or eight screenplays with Gerry Conway between 1979 and 1985, I knew that the moment a major studio came in, the payment to both scriptwriter and copyright-holder go up. This had happened to Gerry and me with our very last project together.

The only fly in the ointment: If I ever had a shot at writing even the first draft of the screenplay of this "Captain Thunder" movie, it went out the window when the Big Studio came in. The Big Studio had its own currently favored screenwriters, some of them under contract for multiple-picture deals; and with such credits as I had several years in the past, I need not apply.

Truth to tell, I didn't care all that much. After all, Dann and I would get rich on the merchandising, right?

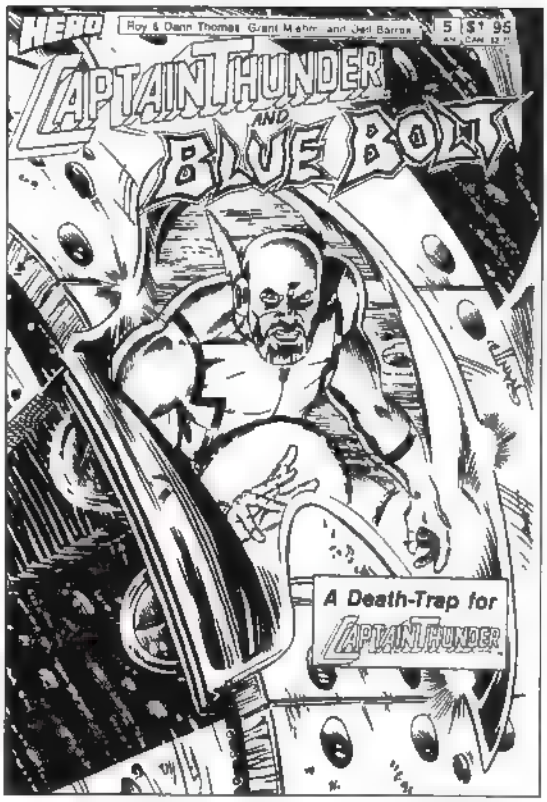
Well, not really. At a certain point, if the movie was actually made, the Big Studio would own Cap and Bluey outright. Oh, we'd be allowed to keep comic book rights and make a few bucks out of them, but that was about it. But hey, for that buy-out to kick in, Dann and I were going to have had to be paid a fairly hefty sum, considerably more than the not-bad option money. From what we'd heard (maybe accurately, maybe not), Dave Stevens had made a not dissimilar deal with Disney for his *Rocketeer*, another alternative comic, and one with more going for it in terms of standing than *CT&BB* had.

Like Clark Gable said in "The Tall Men": "I dream small."

Dann and I had only recently moved to a 40-acre place in rural South Carolina, and the buy-out money, if it came, would pay the mortgage for a long time to come, with pocket change left over for more llamas, toucans, and Scottish highlander cattle. One's priorities tend to change over time.

But there was a catch. (To paragraph Joseph Heller, "That's some catch, that Catch-CT&BB.") We had to make certain we had full rights to the characters, in writing. After all, there had been a number of artists associated with *Captain Thunder and Blue Bolt*—first Dell Barras, then mostly E.R. Cruz, with one issue each penciled by Grant Miehm and Rick Stasi. Then there were a couple of people who only inked an issue or so, and one or two who had worked just on a cover or two.

And that, my practical-minded wife decided, was that. Why should not one, not two, but as many as seven or eight artists sign over all rights to us, for no payment? Especially since the agreement which my agent's attorney had worked out for the artists to sign contained a clause or two which (for the best of legal reasons, we were vaguely informed) sounded almost insulting to the artists. And it



Captain Thunder inside the "War Wheel." ©1998 Roy & Dann Thomas.

made no sense for us to pay out money to anybody, then have the whole deal fall through and we actually wind up in the red.

By this time, I'd become rather fatalistic about the whole thing. It all rather reminded me of that famous episode in Norse mythology where Balder is killed by a poisoned dart or something, and can be restored to life only if every single living thing on Earth sheds a tear for him. If even one creature fails to do so, Balder stays dead.

What do *you* think happened to Balder?

Still, I figured, nothing ventured, nothing gained. I made a half-hearted bet with my wife that the artists would sign because they had nothing to gain by not doing so, and by doing us a favor there was always a chance they might benefit in the long run, even if we couldn't promise them anything.

Then, with the help of Dennis and others, I tracked down each of the artists—one guy who had merely drawn one cover was off in the Caribbean somewhere—and explained the deal to them. I couldn't really promise them anything; they'd just have to sign the paper and trust me or not.

Amazingly, each of them signed the half-insulting little contract. I've rarely risen higher in terms of faith in my fellow human beings than I did circa 1992. I've got a warm spot in my heart for each and every one of them.

So the bargain with the Big Studio was struck, and Dann and I received a fair amount of option money. We shared it (not equally, but we did share it) with the artists and with Dennis as original publisher. We received several thank-you notes.

Then began the waiting. The way Dann and I heard it, there was this one Great Young Screenwriter who was going to work his wonders with *Captain Thunder and Blue Bolt* for the Big Studio. Only thing was, he was working on another project for them and wouldn't be free for a few months. So they waited for him.

And we waited for *them*.

Months went by. A fair number of months, in fact.

Eventually, we heard that, whether with that screenwriter and/or perhaps another one, they had "failed to lick the problems inherent in the material." That puzzled me. Sure, the Producer and the Big Studio had to decide whether Captain Thunder and Blue Bolt would be in costume or not (though, why the fancy names if they weren't?); and they weren't liable to use the comic-book-outrageous "Krakatoa, Beast of Java" or "The Iguana Boys" (though there's nothing inherently more ridiculous in them than in the Penguin or the Joker); and they weren't gonna have a big "War Wheel" knockoff rolling improbably across the Scottish countryside, either. Dann and I had always assumed they'd bring things down a bit, treat father and son as a sort of super-powered pair of James Bonds on the track of the international murderers who had framed Captain Thunder.

I'd never heard exactly what had gone wrong, and the year's option was fast running out. When I learned it wasn't going to be renewed, I was tempted to shrug my shoulders and count Dann and myself (and the artists) lucky to have gotten the money we did. Still, I really did like the idea of a "Captain Thunder" movie, so not long before the option lapsed I arranged for a conference call between the Producer, myself, and a female colleague with whom I'd recently co-written a first-season episode of "Xena: Warrior Princess."

This was it: My first and final chance to find out what the big "problem" was that the Producer and the Big Studio had failed to "lick." My colleague and I came prepared with a more down-to-earth, James-Bondian approach to a super-hero movie. What we weren't prepared for, though, was what the Producer told us.

He and the Big Studio still liked the idea of the father-and-son super-hero conflict. But it turned out that, somehow, he had believed (and had made the Big Studio believe) that there was some Other Story inherent in *Captain Thunder and Blue Bolt*, just waiting to be found and released. A story that had little or nothing to do with striving to clear Captain Thunder of assassination, let alone with battling the likes of King's Gambit or the Merchants of Menace.

To me, it became clear that the Producer, and through him the Big Studio, had deluded themselves into looking for something that wasn't there, rather than concentrating on what *was*.

What *was* that secret storyline and direction that lurked just beneath the surface in *CT&BB*, waiting to be set free?

Beats the hell out of me.

Dann and I had just been trying to write a reasonably good comic book, one that was neither as darkly grim nor as edgy as was becoming the trend. We didn't recall putting this hidden direction into the comic book. So maybe it wasn't really there at all.

Evidently the Producer and the Big Studio agreed, because shortly thereafter they let the option lapse.

As for us, we haven't given up yet on *Captain Thunder and Blue Bolt*. And, strangely, neither have a few other people.

Dennis Mallonee has put the beginning of our published issues on Heroic Publishing's website at *www.heroicpub.com/captainthunder*, and would like to resume publishing *CT&BB* the minute the climate is right.

I've spoken with a new (but going) comics publisher in Spain about the possibility of their printing both old and new *Captain Thunder* stories.

Not long ago, a small alternative company in the U.S. inquired indirectly about the possibility of publishing new *CT&BB* stories.

And when Dann and I were in L.A. this past summer, my agent Dan Ostroff said he had just found another producer who he thought might be "right" for *Captain Thunder*. He might just manage to sell it again, one of these days.

Yeah, *Captain Thunder and Blue Bolt* may not be *Sin City* or *Astro City* in the eyes of comics fans—

But it's coming back.

One way or another, it's coming back, and soon.

Maybe the *next* producer or big studio that options it actually *will* understand it.

re:

continued from page 55

early letters lurk somewhere in the University of Oregon archives (and may they *stay* buried!).

Thanks for *Alter Ego* V2#2: My money's on Sol Brodsky as early *FF* inker. Why? Because he told me that he designed the original logo—so it seems logical.

Here's a tidbit: Gardner Fox's literary agent August Lenniger was by coincidence also the longtime agent of pulp author E. Hoffmann Price (for a while, Price used both Otis Adelbert Kline and, under a pseudonym, Lenniger, too). That was early/mid-1930s. When Price made his professional "comeback" in the late 1970s, he again used Lenniger. Small world and all that.

Too bad there isn't a similar set of institutional archives that contain Otto Binder's papers. (Or is there?) As you mention in the *Best of A/E* collected volume, he was very open and helpful toward you when you were getting started. Similarly, also back in the '60s, E. Hoffmann Price was kind enough to take up what turned out to be a couple decades of correspondence with me spanning the period from before I turned comics pro to long after I was publishing a line of books and magazines.

In each case, the trail leads back to Otis Adelbert Kline: Price was his protege in the early *Weird Tales* days, and Binder was later sent to NYC by Kline on behalf of his literary agency and went on to become the main *Captain Marvel* writer in the 1940s. As you know, Price hung out with H.P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard as a contemporary, while Kline was Howard's agent in later days. Small world and all that.

David Anthony Kraft
1 Screamer Mountain
Clayton, GA 30525

It sure is! "Dave the Dude" was a writer for Marvel and other companies in the 1970s-80s, and the longtime publisher of the excellent Comics Interview. *He's also sent us a generous donation of materials which will appear in future issues of* A/E. *After Vol. 2 #2 came out, he sent a postcard pointing out that Stan Lee's two-page synopsis for* F.F. *#1 had been printed, in his own* CI, *years earlier—albeit at a much-reduced size. This time, he was glad people would actually be able to* read *it, despite the lousy typewriter ribbon.*

Dear Roy:

I just read the interview you did with Stan Lee in *Comic Book Artist* #2. Zounds! What a memory! Your penetrating questions were countered with no less than 11 "I don't remember's"—with a gratuitous "I'm trying to remember," and "I don't specifically recall" thrown in for good measure. Such aplomb and attention to detail make me rest at ease that the annals of comic history are assured!

But really. Stan is a fine man. I have nothing but the utmost respect for him. He's like a dad to me, for crying out loud! So a few things managed to slip by him over the years. That doesn't change the fact that he lives in a mansion and drives around in a Rolls Royce now, does it?

Where to begin? There's so much to begin with on the subject of comics as far as I'm concerned that it isn't in the least bit funny. I have numerous observations—not to mention downright ideas. Perhaps it would be best if I start with the fundamentals. That is: What I most like and what I don't see anymore:

There used to be such a beauty to comics. I was at my mother's house a while back and wanted to show my nephews some old issues of *Amazing Spider-Man*. (I have my collection stored there.) I pulled out something like the first twenty issues and carefully laid them out like tiles across the bed. We all looked on. I mean, they were gorgeous. Just look at the covers, there was an underlying beauty about them. The composition/dynamism/color all fused together. I mean Art in the true sense!

Then I take up and look at some vintage Kirby from the period. *The Fantastic Four* was stupendous. I mean, there were flashes of genius in that material. And the *Thor* issues—in particular those Vinnie Colletta inked—they're absolutely awesome! Not nearly enough credit given here, as far as I'm concerned.

Again, there was a beauty inherent.

What do you see today?

Basically what you see—or rather are affronted by—are a bunch of garishly-composed, sweaty steroid cases, bashing about the cover strangling some victim. *Not* my idea of a treat to the eyes at all!

Beauty, (not to mention composition, aplomb, and plain tasteful rendering)? *fiffffff*. Gone. What you are left with is the stereotype comic book. That is, a garish, messy, loud product your Aunt Penny wants to wrench from your hands and hurl in the trash.

Whoops! Looks like we overlooked one of John Byrne's many pastiches of Jack Kirby's Fantastic Four *#1 cover in our last issue. This one is from* FF *#264. ©1998 Marvel Entertainment.*

Hey, people—*I thought we got beyond all that by now!*

Anyway. I aired a principle, so I feel better.

Yours till Stan says, "Roy who?"

Paul de Vinny
Freemont, California

He might say that now, Paul, if you caught him on a bad day. (Just kidding, Stan.) It was because of Stan's self-confessedly bad memory about many items that Jon Cooke asked me to interview Stan, and treated the piece more as a "conversation" than an interview. Because I worked so closely with Stan from 1965 till at least 1974, and to some extent even after that, I hope I was able to steer the interview in a constructive direction. As to your comments on today's comics... we'll just let them stand.

Roy:

The combo of *Comic Book Artist* and *Alter Ego* is working well. A lot of the perspectives present in your well-conducted interviews haven't been explored before, and it's refreshing to have a publication that zeroes in on these specifics.

I do hope, however, that a balance will be struck between interviews, articles, commentaries, etc. A variety of types of features makes for a better publication, in my opinion.

continued on page 120

Read Back Issue Excerpts At: www.twomorrows.com

ALTER EGO #1 (84 pages) ROY THOMAS fanzine is back, all-new STAN LEE SCHWARTZ. ORDWAY HASEN H.G. PETER, FAWCETT COLLECTORS OF AMER CA, MR MONSTER color ORDWAY cover & more!

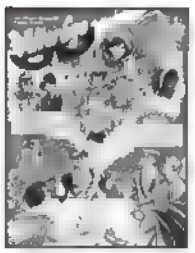
ALTER EGO #2: (100 pages) All-new THOMAS material! E SNER "SPIRIT" story, KANE, FOX & SCHWARTZ on The Atom, LARRY L EBER & JACK BURNLEY intvs KANIGHER FCA, new color KANE & BURNLEY covers more!

ALTER EGO #3: (100 pages) More all-new material by ROY THOMAS ALEX ROSS cover & intv JERRY ORDWAY, BILL EVERETT, CARL BURGOS. Giant FAWCETT section with C.C. BECK, SWAYZE & more!

ALTER EGO #4: (100 pages) All-new salute: 60 years of HAWK MAN & FLASH ROY THOMAS remembers GIL KANE intvs. with KUBERT MOLOOFF, LAMPERT FOX FCA with BECK & SWAYZE. KUBERT covers, & more!

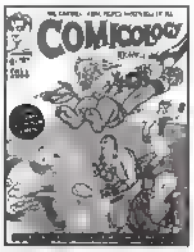
ALTER EGO #5 (100 pages, Special JUSTICE SOCIETY issue intvs. with SHELLY MAYER GIL KANE, MART NODELL, GEORGE ROUSSOS, FCA with BECK & SWAYZE INFANTINO ORDWAY wraparound cover & more!

ALTER EGO #6: (100 pages) GENE COLAN intv. how-to books by STAN LEE and KANIGHER ALL STAR SQUADRON, MAC RABOY section, FCA with BECK & SWAYZE. COLAN and RABOY covers, & more!



ALTER EGO #7: (100 pages) A companion issue to the ALL-STAR COMPANION! SCHWARTZ intv JLA-JSA teamups, more MAC RABOY, FCA with BECK & SWAYZE, BUCKLER and BECK covers, & more!

COMICOLOGY #1: (100 pages) The new magazine for MODERN COMICS fans, with a BRUCE TIMM cover, intv & sketchbook, JEPH LOEB interview LEA HERNANDEZ MANYA, USAGI YOJIMBO. 60 years of ROBIN, & more



COMICOLOGY #2: (100 pages) MIKE ALLRED interview and portfolio, 60 years of THE SPIRIT, 25 years of the X-MEN, PAUL GRIST interview and art FORTY WINKS, new color ALLRED and GRIST covers, & more!

COMIC BOOK ARTIST #7: (132 pages) 1970s MARVELMANIA! BYRNE, GULACY DAN ADKINS, RICH BUCKLER STEVE GERBER DOUG MOENCH, JIM MOONEY, DENIS KITCHEN, new GULACY cover & more!

CBA #9: (116 pages) THE CHARLTON COMICS STORY PART ONE! DICK GIORDANO PETER MORISI, JIM APARO JOE GILL, FRANK MCLAUGHLIN SAM GLANZMAN. new GIORDANO cover, and more

CBA #10: (116 pages WALTER SIMONSON OLD GODS & NEW! Also, WOMEN OF THE COMICS MARIE SEVERIN, RAMONA FRADON, TRINA ROBBINS, JOHN WORKMAN, new SIMONSON cover and more

CBA #11: (116 pages) ALEX TOTH AND SHELDON MAYER! TOTH interviews, art, appreciations checklist and more. Also, interviews with SHELLY MAYER'S kids, the real life inspiration for SUGAR & SPIKE

CBA #12: (116 pages) CHARLTON COMICS OF THE 1970s! Rare art by & interviews with JOE STATON, JOHN BYRNE DON NEWTON, TOM SUTTON, MIKE ZECK, NICK CUTI, a NEW E-MAN strip, new STATON cover and more!

KIRBY CHECKLIST: Lists every Kirby comic, plus books, portfolios unpublished work cross-references reprints, & more!! A must for Ebay™ shoppers 100 pgs!

JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR #18: MARVEL issue! Intvs. w/ KIRBY LEE THOMAS, ROMITA, BUSCEMA, more! 68 pgs. Kirby/Sinnott cover

#20: WOMEN! KIRBY DAVE STEVENS interviews, LISA KIRBY unused 10-page story CAPT. VICTORY screenplay more! 68 pages.

#21 KIRBY GIL KANE BRUCE TIMM intvs., LEE vs. KIRBY, SILVER STAR screenplay, unpublished art, more! 68 pages.

KIRBY COLLECTOR #22: VILLAINS KIRBY, BUDE, MIGNOLA interviews, FF #49 pencils, KOBRA, more! 68 pages. Kirby/Stevens cover

#23: interviews with KIRBY DENNY O'NEIL, TRACY KIRBY unInked FF #49 pencils, unused SOUL LOVE story, more! 68 pages

#24: BATTLES! KIRBY'S original art fight, JIM SHOOTER, SGT. FURY GLORY BOAT pencils, more 68 pages, Kirby/Mignola cover

KIRBY COLLECTOR #25 S&K! KIRBY, SIMON SEVERIN intvs., unused BOY EXPLORERS story, MAINLINE COMICS, more 100 pages

#26: GODS! COLOR NEW GODS plates, KIRBY & SIMONSON intvs. BIG CA. INFLUENCES, THOR MR. MIRACLE more! 72 pages

#27: KIRBY INFLUENCE ALEX ROSS intv KIRBY FAMILY Roundtable, top pros discuss Kirby's influence 72 pages, Kirby, Timm cover

KIRBY COLLECTOR #28: KIRBY INFLUENCE Part Two! MARK HAMILL, KRGALUSI, BUDE COLLETTA, more! Kirby/Allred cover

#29: 70s MARVEL WORK! interviews with KIRBY, GRFFEN, BUCKLER, '70s COVER GALLERY, more Kirby/Janson cover

#30: 80s WORK ALAN MOORE intv. in-depth look at HUNGER DOGS, SUPER POWERS, SILVER STAR, AN MAT ON more! 68 pages

COLLECTED KIRBY COLLECTOR Vol Two: 160-page trade paperback reprints TJKC #10-12, plus a new section featuring a tour of the Kirby's house, plus over 30 pieces of unpublished Kirby art

COLLECTED KIRBY COLLECTOR Vol Three: 176-page trade paperback reprints TJKC #13-15, a new introduction by STEVE BISSETTE, plus 30 more new pieces of unpublished Kirby art!

ORDER BY FAX, PHONE, MAIL, E-MAIL, OR USE OUR SECURE ONLINE STORE:
www.twomorrows.com
These Prices Reflect New 2001 US Postal Rates.

Name _____
Street _____
_____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____
Country (If outside the US) _____
ENCLOSED IS: ❑ Check or Money Order for US $ _____
CHARGE MY: ❑ VISA ❑ MasterCard
Cardholder's Name: _____
Card # _____
Expiration Date: _____
Telephone _____

VISA MasterCard

Send US funds, drawn on a US bank, payable to:
TwoMorrows • 1812 Park Dr. • Raleigh NC 27605
PHONE: 919-833-8092 • FAX: 919-833-8023
E-MAIL: twomorrow@aol.com

SUBSCRIBE! SAVE 10-15%
(NEARLY $1 PER ISSUE!)

All start with current issue

- ❑ **ALTER EGO** (4 issues)
- ❑ **COMICOLOGY** (4 issues)
- ❑ **DRAW!** (4 issues)
  - ❑ $20 STANDARD US
  - ❑ $32 1ST CLASS US
  - ❑ $40 CANADA
  - ❑ $44 SURFACE
  - ❑ $60 AIRMAIL
- ❑ **COMIC BOOK ARTIST** (6 issues + FREE SPECIAL)
  - ❑ $36 STANDARD US
  - ❑ $54 1ST CLASS US
  - ❑ $66 CANADA
  - ❑ $72 SURFACE
  - ❑ $96 AIRMAIL
- ❑ **KIRBY COLLECTOR** (4 Tabloid-Size issues)
  - ❑ $36 STANDARD US
  - ❑ $52 1ST CLASS US
  - ❑ $60 CANADA
  - ❑ $84 SURFACE
  - ❑ $80 AIRMAIL

SUBSCRIPTION SPEED:
STANDARD US (1-2 weeks)
1ST CLASS US (1-3 days)
CANADA (Canada 1 week)
SURFACE (4-8 wks, foreign)
AIRMAIL (1 week foreign)

BACK ISSUES! (Prices incl. US postage)

ALTER EGO
- ❑ #1 • $8 US
- ❑ #2 • $8 US
- ❑ #3 • $8 US
- ❑ #4 • $8 US
- ❑ #5 • $8 US
- ❑ #6 • $8 US
- ❑ #7 • $8 US

COMIC BOOK ARTIST
- ❑ #7 • $8 US
- ❑ #9 • $9 US
- ❑ #10 • $9 US
- ❑ #11 • $9 US
- ❑ #12 • $9 US

COMICOLOGY
- ❑ #1 • $8 US
- ❑ #2 • $8 US
- ❑ #3 • $8 US

DRAW!
- ❑ #1 • $8 US

KIRBY COLLECTOR
- ❑ #18 • $8 US
- ❑ #20 • $8 US
- ❑ #21 • $8 US
- ❑ #22 • $8 US
- ❑ #23 • $8 US
- ❑ #24 • $8 US
- ❑ #25 • $8 US
- ❑ #26 • $8 US
- ❑ #27 • $8 US
- ❑ #28 • $8 US
- ❑ #29 • $8 US
- ❑ #30 • $8 US
- ❑ #31 • $13 US

COMIC BOOK ARTIST COLLECTION VOL. 1
- ❑ $26 US

COMIC BOOK ARTIST SPECIAL EDITION
- ❑ $10 US (or FREE by subscribing to CBA)

ALTER EGO: THE CBA COLLECTION
- ❑ $20 US

COLLECTED KIRBY COLLECTOR VOL. 2
- ❑ $19 US

COLLECTED KIRBY COLLECTOR VOL. 3
- ❑ $21 US

KIRBY CHECKLIST
- ❑ $7 US

STREETWISE
- ❑ $24 US

ALL-STAR COMPANION
- ❑ $24 US

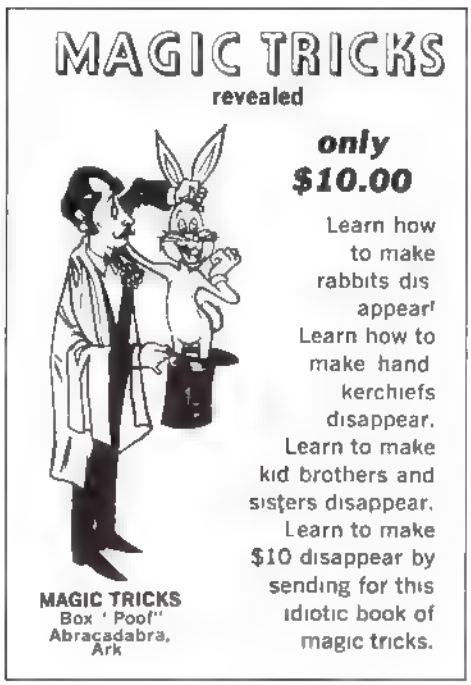
MR. MONSTER, VOL. 0
- ❑ $20 US

FOR BACK ISSUES OUTSIDE THE US ADD:
$2 Per Item CANADA
$3 Per Item SURFACE
$7 Per Item AIRMAIL

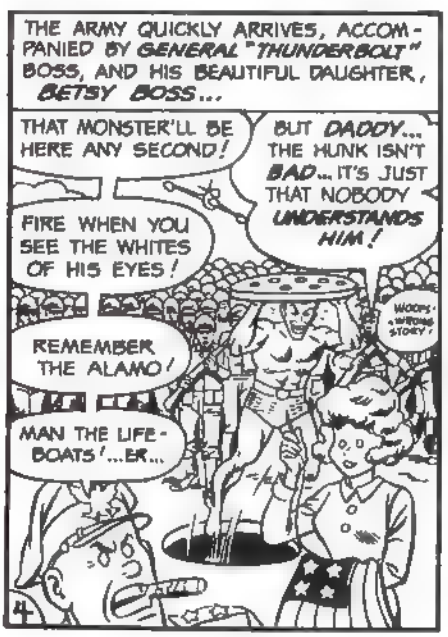
The Topps Parodies

Between them, A/E Vol 2, #1-2, and the 1997 trade paperback Alter Ego: The Best of the Legendary Comics Fanzine *printed eleven 8-page, eight-panel, 2½" x 3½" mini-comics printed in color by Topps Chewing Gum, circa 1967, to parody comics of the period. Here are the remaining five of the 16.*

"The Incredible Hunk" Cover concept: Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script: Roy Thomas or Len Brown
Art: Gil Kane and Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman

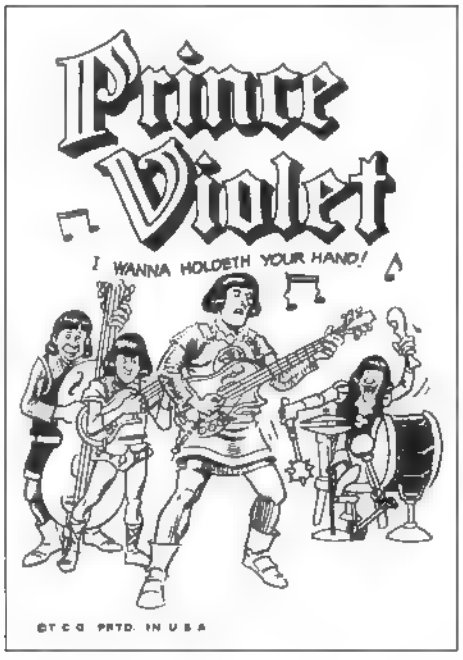

MAGIC TRICKS
revealed
only
$10.00
Learn how to make rabbits dis appear! Learn how to make hand kerchiefs disappear. Learn to make kid brothers and sisters disappear. Learn to make $10 disappear by sending for this idiotic book of magic tricks.
MAGIC TRICKS
Box 'Poof'
Abracadabra, Ark

AS NIGHT FALLS OVER THE CITY, A CITIZEN BEHOLDS A MIND-STAGGERING SIGHT, AND A CRY GOES UP...
IT'S THE INCREDIBLE HUNK! RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!
THIS ALWAYS HAPPENS JUST WHEN I'VE GOT A HAIRDRESSER'S APPOINTMENT!
WHRUCK!
2


THE ARMY QUICKLY ARRIVES, ACCOMPANIED BY GENERAL "THUNDERBOLT" BOSS, AND HIS BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER, BETSY BOSS...
THAT MONSTER'LL BE HERE ANY SECOND!
BUT DADDY... THE HUNK ISN'T BAD... IT'S JUST THAT NOBODY UNDERSTANDS HIM!
FIRE WHEN YOU SEE THE WHITES OF HIS EYES!
REMEMBER THE ALAMO!
MAN THE LIFE-BOATS!...ER...
4

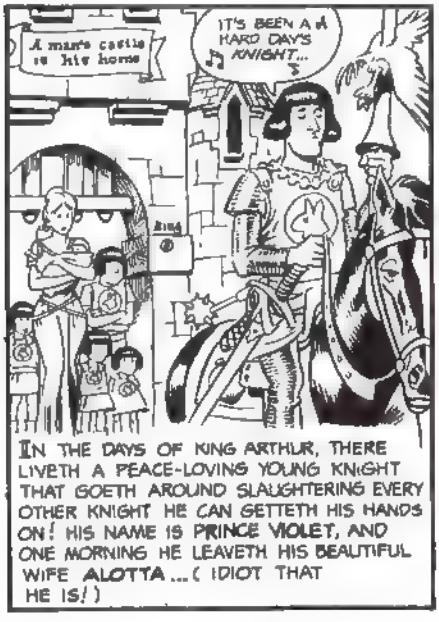
THEN, THE FINAL CONFRONTATION... THE HUNK VS THE ARMY!
STOP, HUNK! YOU HAVEN'T A CHANCE! MAKE A MOVE AND WE'LL BLAST YOU TO SMITHEREENS!
EVEN THOUGH YOU ARE A HORRIBLE GREEN SKINNED MONSTER, HUNK, I LOVE YOU!
HUNK HAVE MISSION!
5

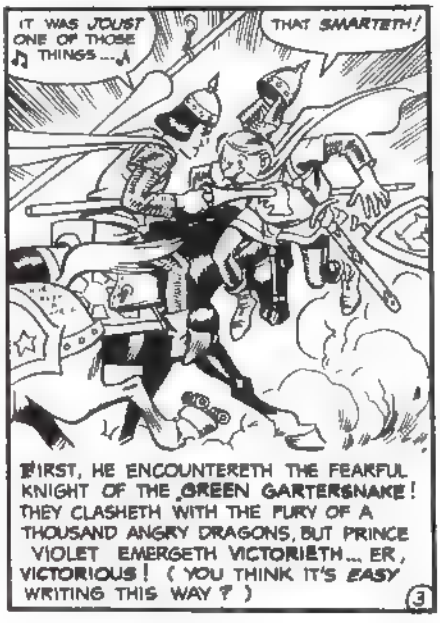
BAH! NOTHING STOPS HUNK! HUNK LOOKING FOR SOMEONE ELSE!
DOES THIS MEAN OUR ENGAGEMENT IS OFF?
GOOD HEAVENS! LOOK WHO HE'S BEEN LOOKING FOR! IT'S...
...AND THERE HIM IS!
6



PET MONKEY
$18.95
ABLE TO FIT YOU IN THE PALM OF ITS HAND
Hey kids now you can be the first on your block to have a live ten foot tall ape! Makes a great pet. Feed it bananas, lollipops, neighbors! Watch it do tricks, mangle your brother and climb the Empire State building. HURRY, we're running out of bananas!
KONG ENT. Cage 33, Africa

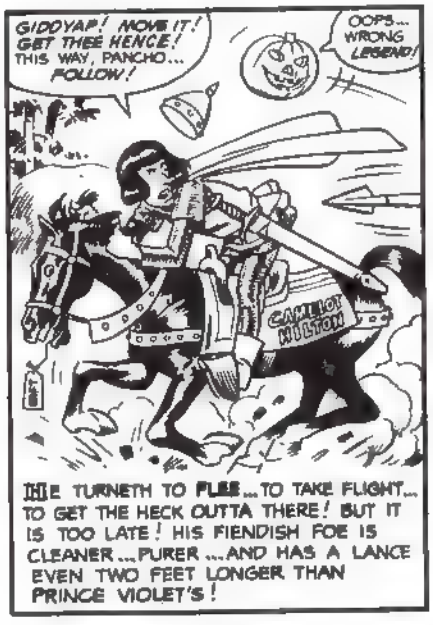
Cover concept:
Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script, pp. 2-7: Roy Thomas?
Art: Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman


A man's castle is his home
IT'S BEEN A HARD DAY'S KNIGHT...
IN THE DAYS OF KING ARTHUR, THERE LIVETH A PEACE-LOVING YOUNG KNIGHT THAT GOETH AROUND SLAUGHTERING EVERY OTHER KNIGHT HE CAN GETTETH HIS HANDS ON! HIS NAME IS PRINCE VIOLET, AND ONE MORNING HE LEAVETH HIS BEAUTIFUL WIFE ALOTTA... (IDIOT THAT HE IS!)


IT WAS JOUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS...
THAT SMARTETH!
FIRST, HE ENCOUNTERETH THE FEARFUL KNIGHT OF THE GREEN GARTERSNAKE! THEY CLASHETH WITH THE FURY OF A THOUSAND ANGRY DRAGONS, BUT PRINCE VIOLET EMERGETH VICTORIETH... ER, VICTORIOUS! (YOU THINK IT'S EASY WRITING THIS WAY?)
3

IF EVER I WOULD CLEAVE YOU..
THEN, HE MEETETH THE TERRIBLE KNIGHT OF THE PURPLE PEACHPIT! BUT AGAIN PRINCE VIOLET IS TRIUMPHANT! HE WINNETH BECAUSE HIS HEART IS PURE... HIS NOSE IS CLEAN... AND MAINLY BECAUSE HIS LANCE IS TWO FEET LONGER THAN ANYBODY ELSE'S!

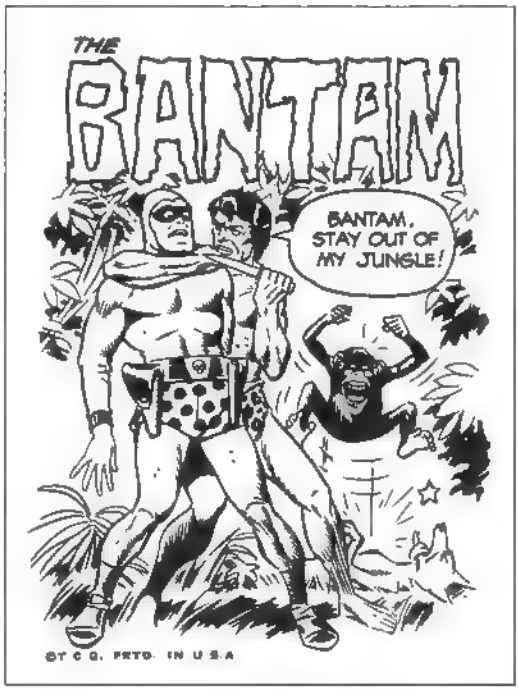
I COULD HAVE LANCED ALL KNIGHT...
...UH OH!
RETURN TO KING'S STABLE
(FREE) LANCE
BUT THEN, SUDDENLY, HE COMETH FACE-TO-FACE WITH A HORRIBLY THINGETH... THE ONLY FOE HE CANNOT FEARLESSLY FACE AND FANTASTICALLY FIGHT...
5


GIDDYAP! MOVE IT! GET THEE HENCE! THIS WAY, PANCHO... FOLLOW!
OOPS... WRONG LEGEND!
CAMELOT MILLTON
HE TURNETH TO FLEE... TO TAKE FLIGHT... TO GET THE HECK OUTTA THERE! BUT IT IS TOO LATE! HIS FIENDISH FOE IS CLEANER... PURER... AND HAS A LANCE EVEN TWO FEET LONGER THAN PRINCE VIOLET'S!

MADISON AVENUE TRIUMPHS AGAIN!
PRINCE VIOLET HATH BEEN DEFEATED BY A FEARSOME FOE WHO WAS STRONGER THAN DIRT! HE HATH BEEN DEFEATED BY THE KNIGHT OF THE WHITE AJAX... AND HE ISN'T EVEN SANFORIZED! GADZOOKS!
7

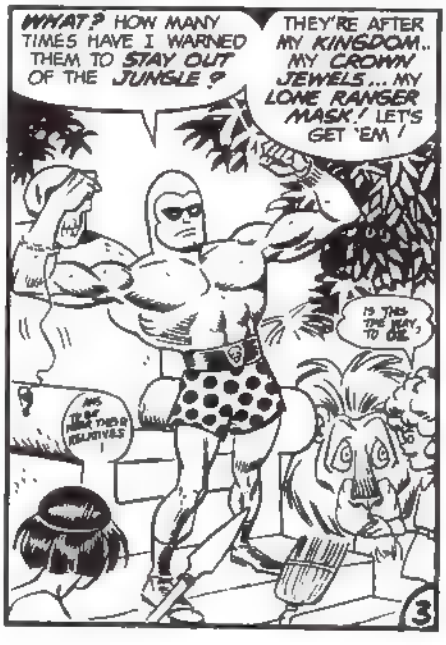
Color: Prince & Horse both all-white

Cover concept.
Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script, pp. 2-7: Len Brown?
Art: Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman



HEY BOYS—GET
GI MELVIN
Over 11" tall
21 movable parts
real bad breath
GI MELVIN is an action soldier
GI MELVIN is an action marine
GI MELVIN is an action sailor
But mainly, GI MELVIN is an action DOLL
Yicch! You should be ashamed— a boy playing with toy dolls!

ON THE DARK CONTINENT, THE BANTAM SURVEYS HIS FRIENDLY NATIVE TRIBE AS...
LEAPING LEOPARDS! IT'S MY WARRIOR CHIEF BUGABOO!
WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM, BUGGY OLD BOY? I'VE GOT LOTS OF THINGS ON MY MIND!
WHITE HUNTERS INVADING OUR JUNGLE. O GHOST WHO WALKS!
WHY DO ELEPHANTS LIVE IN HERDS?
NETS
2

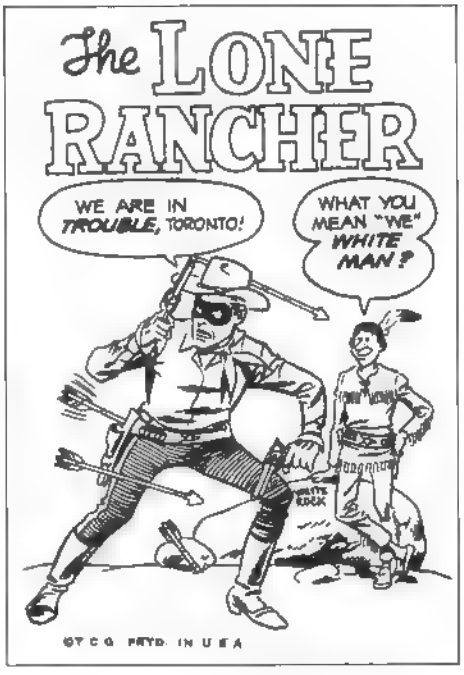

WHAT? HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I WARNED THEM TO STAY OUT OF THE JUNGLE?
THEY'RE AFTER MY KINGDOM.. MY CROWN JEWELS... MY LONE RANGER MASK! LET'S GET 'EM!
IS THIS THE WAY TO DIE
NO, I'LL TAKE THEM RELATIVES!
3

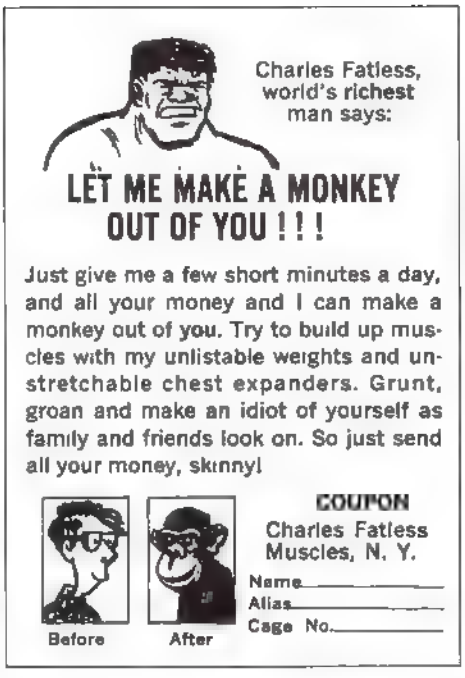
COME, FAITHFUL ARMY OF HORRIBLE-LOOKING PYGMIES! WE MUST DRIVE OUT THE WHITE HUNTERS BEFORE THEY STEAL ALL MY... ER, OUR RICHES!
THEY SHOULD KNOW BETTER ... WITH THE GHOST WHO WALKS"!
ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT FOREST FIRES!
KANGO
ELEPHANT'S GRAVEYARD
FUNNY... I DON'T SEE ANY SIGN OF ANY WHITE HUNTERS!
4

RYGHT, BANTAM! WE JUST LURED YOU HERE, TO GET RID OF YOU.. BECAUSE YOU TAKE ALL OUR PRECIOUS STONES AS TAXES!
BUT YOU CAN'T! I'M IMMORTAL! I CAN'T DIE! THAT'S WHY THEY CALL ME "THE GHOST WHO WALKS"!
COME TO THINK OF IT.. MAYBE EVEN YOU CAN'T!
ONE MAN
5

WRONG, BANTAM! WE KNOW YOUR FAMILY'S JUST BEEN TRYCKING US FOR YEARS WITH EACH FATHER RAISING HIS SON TO BE A BANTAM!
YEAH! THERE IS NO GHOST WHO WALKS... JUST A FAMILY THAT WANTS ALL OUR MONEY!
QUICK SAND
SLOW SAND
WAIT! THE SUIT HE WAS WEARING WAS JUST INFLATABLE, LIKE A LIFE RAFT! AND, INSIDE...

RUN! IT WAS US WHO WAS WRONG!
INSIDE THE RUBBER BANTAM.. WAS THE REAL BANTAM!
SURE! BUT DON'T BE AFRAID! I JUST WEAR THAT SUIT SO SOMEBODY'LL PLAY WITH ME!
AND.. HE REALLY IS A "GHOST WHO WALKS"?
REST IN PEACE AT SAM'S ELEPHANT GRAVEYARD! NO WAITING!
7

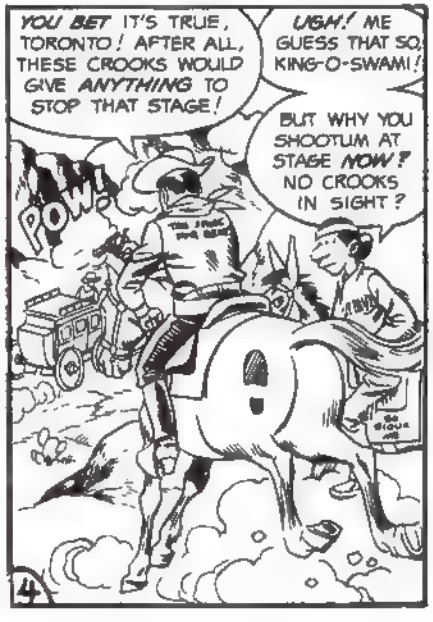



Charles Fatless, world's richest man says:
LET ME MAKE A MONKEY OUT OF YOU!!!
Just give me a few short minutes a day, and all your money and I can make a monkey out of you. Try to build up muscles with my unlistable weights and unstretchable chest expanders. Grunt, groan and make an idiot of yourself as family and friends look on. So just send all your money, skinny!
COUPON
Charles Fatless
Muscles, N. Y.
Name
Alias
Cage No.
Before
After

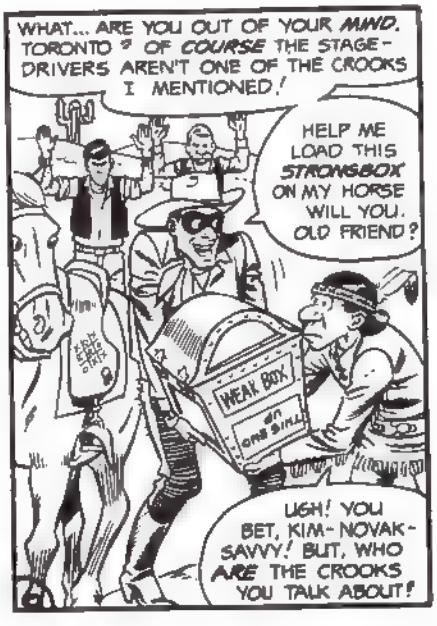
Cover concept:
Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script, pp. 2-7: Roy Thomas
Art: Gil Kane and Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman

AS THE SUN RISES IN THE EAST, WE HEAR THE CRY OF "HI YO SILVERFISH!" THE LONE RANCHER RIDES AGAIN!
MOUNT UP, TORONTO!
THERE'S A STAGECOACH COMING THROUGH THE CANYON, AND SOME CROOKS ARE GOING TO HOLD IT UP!
UGH! ME WITH YOU, KEEN-OL'-SAVAGE!
2

OF ALL THE ADVENTURES IN WHICH WE'VE EVER TAKEN PART, OLD FRIEND, THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT!
UGH! IS THAT TRUE, KIMONO-SAKI?
GETTUM UP, SPROUT!
3

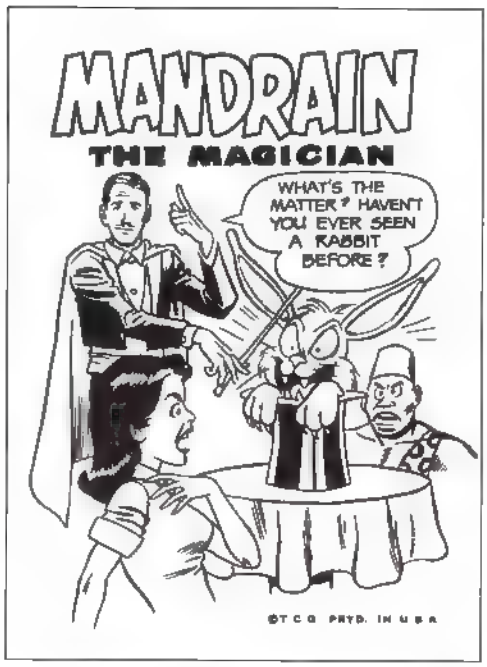

YOU BET IT'S TRUE, TORONTO! AFTER ALL, THESE CROOKS WOULD GIVE ANYTHING TO STOP THAT STAGE!
UGH! ME GUESS THAT SO, KING-O-SWAMI!
BUT WHY YOU SHOOTUM AT STAGE NOW? NO CROOKS IN SIGHT?
POW!
4

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, FAITHFUL INDIAN COMPANION AND CHEAP TOURIST GUIDE? YOUR EYESIGHT MUST BE FAILING!
KEEP HIM COVERED, TORONTO!
UGH! ARE STAGE-DRIVERS THE CROOKS US AFTER KINKY-SAMMY?

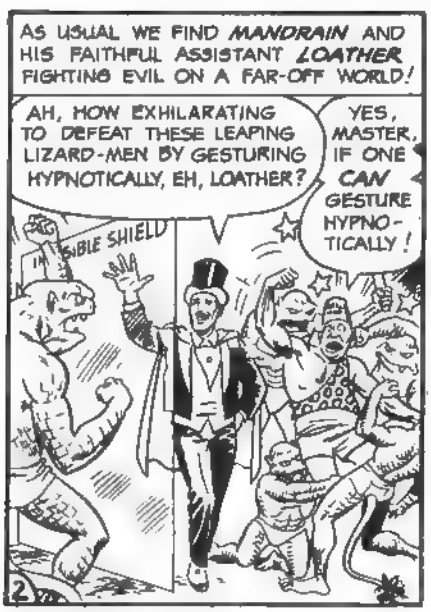

WHAT... ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND, TORONTO? OF COURSE THE STAGE-DRIVERS AREN'T ONE OF THE CROOKS I MENTIONED!
HELP ME LOAD THIS STRONGBOX ON MY HORSE WILL YOU, OLD FRIEND?
UGH! YOU BET, KIM-NOVAK-SAVVY! BUT, WHO ARE THE CROOKS YOU TALK ABOUT?

WHY, I, THOUGHT YOU KNEW, THOSE CROOKS IS US! THAT STRONGBOX CONTAINS A HUNDRED POUNDS OF SILVER!
YOU DON'T THINK SILVER BULLETS GROW ON TREES, DO YOU?
HI YO, SILVERFISH!
WHO WAS THAT MASKED MAN, CHARLIE?
I'LL TELL YOU ONE THING! IT WASN'T THE GREEN HAIRNET!

Cover concept:
Len Brown and Art Spiegelman
Script, pp. 2-7: Len Brown
or Roy Thomas
Art: Gil Kane and Wally Wood
Back cover: Art Spiegelman



Learn
to
Dance
From our trained instructors
Yes, our trained gunslingers will come to your home and shoot bullets at your feet 'til you really are able to do all modern dance steps. Entire course costs only $10. plus cost of ammunition.
MURRY ARTHUR STUDIOS
Box 1-2
Cha Cha Cha, N Y


AS USUAL WE FIND MANDRAIN AND HIS FAITHFUL ASSISTANT LOATHER FIGHTING EVIL ON A FAR-OFF WORLD!
AH, HOW EXHILARATING TO DEFEAT THESE LEAPING LIZARD-MEN BY GESTURING HYPNOTICALLY, EH, LOATHER?
YES, MASTER, IF ONE CAN GESTURE HYPNOTICALLY!
2

BY GESTURING HYPNOTICALLY, LOATHER, I CAN TAKE US TO ANY PLACE MY HEART DESIRES!
B...BUT MASTER, I JUST REMEMBERED..
VOILA! WE'RE IN FAIRYLAND!
3

SILENCE! DO NOT INTERRUPT MANDRAIN OR I'LL GESTURE HYPNOTICALLY AT YOU!
BUT MASTER... I JUST WANTED TO REMIND YOU OF SOMETHING YOU FORGOT!
TAME.
ZOT!
5

ALL RIGHT, LOATHER! I'LL GESTURE HYPNOTICALLY AND GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO TELL ME ABOUT THIS IMPORTANT THING I FORGOT!
Y- YOU FORGOT THAT WHEN YOU GESTURE HYPNOTICALLY, YOU DON'T REALLY CHANGE THINGS PHYSICALLY!
(YAWN!)
ACME
6

S...SO REALLY, WE'RE STILL BACK ON THAT ALIEN PLANET, NOT BACK ON EARTH AT ALL!
OH WELL, NOBODY'S PERFECT!
CONTAINS NO CHICKEN FAT
Camel's
CREAM OF MAGICIAN SOUP
7

COMIC BOOK ARTIST Presents:

Alter Ego™

Vol. 2, No.4
Spring 1999

MICHAEL T. GILBERT Rummages through the Archives of GARDNER FOX

Examining the ROY THOMAS/ NEAL ADAMS Uncanny X-Men

First Time Ever! A WALKING TOUR OF THE KREE-SKRULL WAR

A Vintage (1966) Interview with STEVE DITKO

Plus Rarely-Seen Art by:

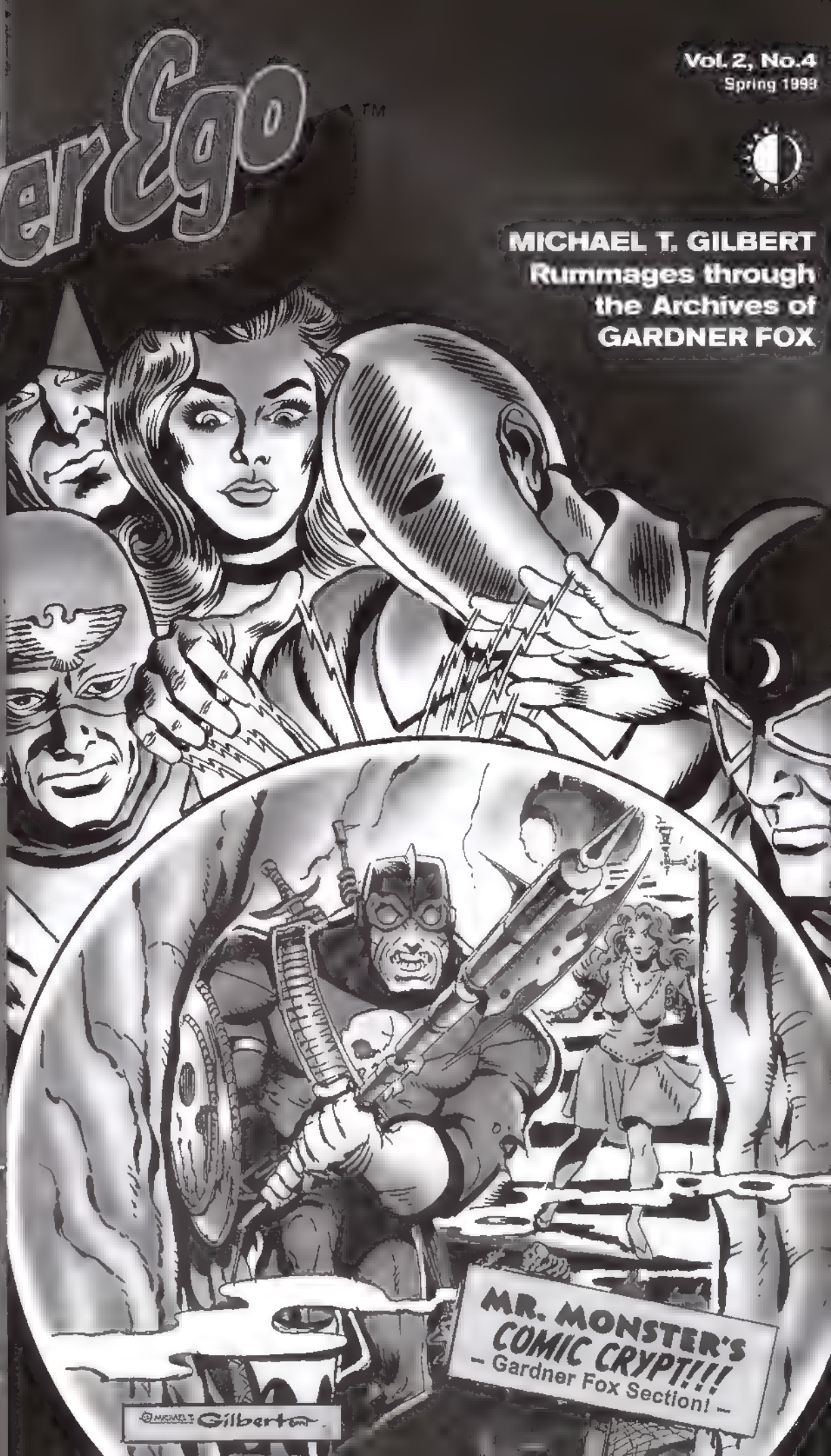
NEAL ADAMS

STEVE DITKO

MICHAEL T. GILBERT

JOE KUBERT

and others!



Justice Society of America ©1998 DC Comics.
Mr. Monster and Kelly ©1993 Michael T. Gilbert.

X Marks the Spot

CELEBRATING A FOND BUT SOMEWHAT VARIANT REMEMBRANCE OF THE THOMAS-ADAMS YEARS

by Roy Thomas

"X"(for "X-Men") does indeed mark the spot—when and where Neal Adams and I began a series of collaborations which between 1968 and 1976 would also include the Inhumans, the Avengers, the War of the Worlds (sort of), and even Conan the Barbarian.

But, Neal's informative interview in *Comic Book Artist* #3 to the contrary, that's *not* where or when the two of us first met.

Back in 1966, as a twenty-something writer and associate editor at Marvel, single and living in Manhattan, I was the original host of what were later called "First Fridays," wherein comics people got together informally once a month (you guess when) to swap truths, rumors, and maybe a few outright lies. At the first "meeting," Wally Wood handed out copies of the premier issue of his new "prozine," *Witzend*.

After I relocated to Brooklyn in mid-'67, these get-togethers moved to others' digs, including those of science-fiction/comics fan Bill Pearson. It was at one of those gatherings, probably in early or mid-'68, that Neal and I first ran into each other.

I had already admired some war stories he had drawn for DC, and was equally impressed by his draftsmanship and by the fact that, though a year younger than I, he had come to comic books *after* drawing a newspaper strip, "Ben Casey"—a reversal of the usual trend in those days. I don't recall what we discussed that evening, but we did talk for a while, and it's beyond the realm of possibility that I didn't say I wished he'd draw something for Marvel sometime

Arlen Schumer's interview with Neal indicates that he has understandably forgotten this encounter, and now believes that when he walked into Marvel's offices one day in late '68, he had "never heard of" me, even though he says by that point he was reading all Marvel's comics, and I was writing several of them a month

Thus, chronologically, the occasion of our initial meeting is the first thing in our relationship about which Neal and I disagree. But not, alas, the last—though I hope and trust there is no true animosity between us.

Certainly there isn't on my part.

Shot from the original artwork, the cover of X-Men #58 features a margin note requesting to remove the guidelines around Havok, drawn by Neal Adams to indicate the proper color separation. ©1999 Marvel Entertainment.

As noted back in *A/E* V2#2, it's inevitable that no two people will remember the same occurrence in exactly the same way. Without documentation, getting at the precise truth of any event is generally impossible; hell, even *with* documentation it's impossible!

At various points in the pieces this issue which deal with Neal's and my collaborations, I've had to confess that I have no precise remembrance of how a particular character or storyline evolved. This admission should not, of course, automatically be taken for agreement with Neal's or anyone else's version of same.

So why have I bothered to deal at considerable length with the Thomas-Adams (or Adams-Thomas, take your pick) collaborations?

Well, originally, I was asked by editor Jon B. Cooke to write, for *CBA* #3, my own personal behind-the-scenes look at the Kree-Skrull War issues of *Avengers*, to complement Neal's own story of his part in that epic, which would be covered in his interview.

Unfortunately, when Neal read the first draft of my article, he felt certain aspects of it so much at variance with his own "take"on them that—primarily because Neal was generously providing enough art and commentary to fill most of *CBA* #3—Jon and I felt we should accede to his wishes that no alternate view of mine about our various collaborations would appear in that issue.

Thus we voluntarily pulled my "Walking Tour of the Kree-Skrull War," as well as material I'd written for *Alter Ego* about our other joint ventures. However, after reading Neal's interview and realizing how far apart our recollections of certain key events were, I felt I had no choice but to print them in the next issue.

Silence, after all, implies acceptance.

And, fondly as I look back on the work Neal and I did together, it would be dishonest to leave the impression that I accept wholesale his version of all events, any more than he wholly accepts mine. I'm well aware that some readers will be more likely to trust Neal's account, others my own—while a few will come up with their own syntheses, or simply say a pox on both their houses.

Photo by Dann Thomas.

Roy Thomas [left] and Al Feldstein *[right] with the special-award statuettes presented to them by convention organizer and sculptor* Bud Bortner *[center] at the Kansas City Comic Book Convention on October 25, 1998. Al, of course, was a major editor, writer, and artist of the EC Comics line in the 1950s and the editor of* Mad *magazine from 1956-83. (And see pg. 23 for Al's Kree-Skrull War connection!)*

What people choose to believe is their business.
Setting down my own account of events is mine.

Thus, the bulk of this issue is devoted to material I originally wrote for inclusion in #3. In a sense, though also touching on the work of John and Sal Buscema, Don Heck, Gil Kane, Denny O'Neil, Tom Palmer, and a few others, this issue of *A/E* might have been subtitled "Neal Adams: The Marvel Years—Another Viewpoint." (And even so, Conan and The War of the Worlds will have to wait for *next* issue.)

However, in the interest of getting everything else said in one issue so that hopefully I'll never have to revisit these events in print again, I have inserted responses to certain statements made in Neal's interview—and *not* always to dispute them.

After all, Neal had far more to say on a positive note about our collaboration than about the things on which we disagree. No co-creator past or present could have made me happier than Neal did with most of his comments on what he feels I brought to our work together. I assume all his statements were said with total sincerity, and there's an equal amount of sincerity in my own remarks on Neal's exemplary work and talent.

Because I didn't want to waste space simply duplicating things Neal said in *CBA* #3, perhaps some sections of what follows (especially the article on the X-Men, since the mutants were covered at the greatest length last issue) may seem at first glance as if I'm simply looking for areas in which to disagree. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Many, many statements of Neal's are left undisputed in this issue; that *generally* means we're in concurrence in that instance. To go over *everything* in detail would have required 30 pages (the length of Neal's interview) rather than twenty, and to no great purpose.

I merely felt a need to read my own account of certain events into the record, as it were. That in no way diminishes my perhaps immodest feeling that the work Neal Adams and I did together starting in 1968 was very special, both to us and to the comics industry.

Luv ya, Neal
You *and* your awesome artwork! Fin

[The super-hero version of Alter Ego—Ron Harris' infinity cover of First Comics' Alter Ego *#4, 1986, transformed. Art ©1999 by Ron Harris. Alter Ego is a trademark of Roy and Dann Thomas.]*

Because of the extra length of this issue of *A/E*, we'll have to forego your letters of comment until V2#5 There's just room for one item, related to *Comic Book Artist* #2.

I feel a need, in passing, to hand out a special award for Muddle-headed Missive of the Month (even if *CBA* is quarterly) to New York's own Chris Considine, whoever he may be, for castigating *CBA* #1-2 for "*National Enquirer*-level journalism."

Oh, sure, there's bound to be a bit of that (and I don't exempt *A/E*), whenever you ask comics people to tell how a comic or character was created. But Considine missed the point. Far from dealing primarily, as he supposes, with "petty politics," there was a wealth of information in *CBA* #1-2 on "the creative process" and "the time periods covered," whether about the Infantino era at DC in #1 or the development of series like *Warlock, Werewolf by Night, Ghost Rider,* and others at Marvel in the '70s. We even learned where Stan got the notion for those informal letters pages in the '60s which added so much to the Marvel mystique, and that's worth knowing, too.

Considine errs in thinking that whenever a writer or artist mentions anything touching on the inevitable hassles between managers and managed, it's nothing *more* than "petty politics." Since comics is mostly a collaborative process, what *would* be amazing would be if everything was created by individuals sitting alone in rooms in a High Tower of Art. It happens, yeah—but rarely—and the *auteurs* talking the most loftily about it aren't necessarily the ones who practice it. Don't ever dismiss humans' capacity for self-delusion or simple puffery. (Just sneak a peak at almost any installment of *First Look* on HBO or anything on the "E!" channel!)

The most creative, innovative people in the comics field (as in movies, TV, *et al.*) don't work in a vacuum. And anyone who thinks this will never truly understand the great teamings like Lee & Kirby—Simon & Kirby—Lee & Ditko—O'Neil & Adams—Siegel & Shuster—Bob Kane & Bill Finger—Claremont & Byrne—Gaines & Kurtzman—Eisner & Iger—and a few others I'll pretend I'm too modest to mention. Or why DC and Marvel/ Timely and Fawcett and Quality and others have had such different styles over the years.

Sure, bickering is unavoidably a part of it, much as we wish it weren't—but it's *not* all just "gossip," and anyone who thinks it is is being myopic. But then, reader Considine said he wasn't going to buy any more issues of *CBA* anyway, so he isn't reading this.

His loss, as much as ours.
I'm glad a lot of people are smarter than that. ***RT*** Fin

Mutant Memories, or: "Write Pretty, Roy!"

THE THOMAS/ADAMS/PALMER X-MEN—ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

by Roy Thomas

Hard as it may be to believe now, *X-Men* was one of Marvel's weaker titles right from its debut in 1963.

When Jack Kirby quit drawing it, it stumbled a bit—and it faltered again when Stan Lee turned it over to me as my first ongoing super-hero writing assignment. But that's another story, to be told if *CBA* ever does an all-X-Men issue. Pencilers Werner Roth, Don Heck, and Ross Andru and I had our moments, but after a year or so I left the book to concentrate on other titles, only to watch sadly as *X-Men* declined still further.

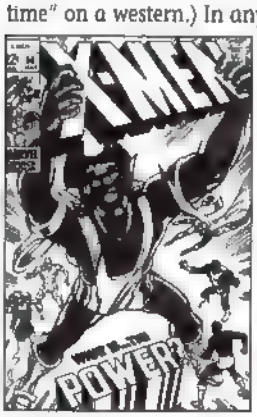
In late 1968 Stan asked me to take over the writing again, to try to save the title. This I reluctantly did, in the midst of a storyline begun by writer Arnold Drake, formerly of DC's *Doom Patrol*. I scripted one feeling-my-way issue with Heck, Roth, and Vince Colletta.

And then Neal walked in.

SOCCO O JAMMA!
I ALMOST GOT CRUSHED MYSELF BACK THERE!
I KNEW YOU'D LOCATE ME SOONER OR LATER
BUT I MANAGED TO ROLL OUT OF A DIVE
AND I'VE BEEN FOLLOWING OUR FELLOWMAN OVER PHARAOH'S HEAD AROUND LEVEL, SO THAT—
NO—IT CAN'T BE—
BUT—IS!!
ANOTHER TEMPLE, IDENTICAL TO THE FIRST—YET MILES FROM THE OTHER, BTS!
THE PHARAOH'S HEAD! LOOMED RIGHT THERE, BEING KING OF ENTRANCE—
JEAN, AH... I'VE GOT A HUNCH I'M GETTING NEAR THE MITTY-BARTTY OF THIS LITTLE MYSTERY...
I'M BREAKING CONTACT NOW, FOR FULL CONCENTRATION!
OVER ON YOUR OWN!!
AND THE ANGEL CHOSE TO FOLLOW
AND, SO AM I!

Superb Neal Adams & Tom Palmer page (from X-Men *#56) showcasing his mastery of the story's Egyptian setting. ©1999 Marvel Entertainment.*

Neal has said he told Stan he'd like to draw Marvel's weakest seller, and that Stan told him *X-Men* was only two issues away from cancellation. You can't get much weaker than that. If Stan said that, however, he was being a bit premature, for in those days it was still publisher Martin Goodman who made the decision to cancel books; nor would Stan have asked me to write *X-Men* if cancellation had been quite that imminent. (After all, this is the editor who wouldn't let me script Marvel's first *Ghost Rider* because he didn't want me "wasting my time" on a western.) In any event, the mutant title *wasn't* cancelled two issues later, so perhaps sales of pre-Adams issues had at least held steady. But they still weren't good.



©1999 Marvel Entertainment

Stan, like me, was impressed with Neal's DC work (likewise with the notion of ending DC's monopoly on its much-hailed new talent) and assigned him to *The X-Men*. The book's current artists were given other assignments.

Judging by *CBA* #3's interview, Neal appears to have forgotten that at the very outset I offered to let him take a stab at scripting *X-Men*, as well as drawing it (something I'm not sure I checked in advance with Stan), because he'd written a couple of stories for DC and they had seemed fine to me. However, Neal told me he liked what I was doing in mags like *The Avengers* and wanted me to stay on—so he obviously *was* at least vaguely familiar with my work by this time, whether or not he recalls it now.

Thus casually, Neal and I became a team.

Actually, I knew a bit more about where the story of *X-Men* #56 was headed than Neal recalls. After all, #54 (written by Arnold Drake) and #55 (scripted by me, building on what Arnold had begun) had introduced the Living Pharaoh and Scott Summers' brother. And, contrary to an implication in the interview, it was I, not Werner Roth, who was plotting *X-Men*. If I was overly non-directive about where the book might go from #56 onward, it was because I was bending over backward to make things comfortable for Neal as *X-Men* artist.

I'm afraid Neal also errs in believing he was chronologically the first person to have the idea to make Alex Summers a mutant.

At the end of #54, two issues prior to Neal's arrival, a blurb says #55 will deal with "The Secret of Cyclops' Brother!" Arnold always intended (and I picked up on it) that he would turn out to be a mutant.

Still, that leaves a curious anomaly: On the last two pages of the lead story in #55, drawn by Heck and Roth, Alex instinctively uses his unsuspected power, and Cyclops exclaims: "YOU—ALEX SUMMERS—ARE A *MUTANT!!*" Does this mean Neal remembers #55 as being not yet completed, and that I went back and rewrote those two pages to lead into *our* debut issue? I have no memory of doing so, but I *had* done something along those lines with *Captain Marvel* #16 when I knew I'd be scripting #17, so I suppose it's possible.

It seems more likely, however, that *X-Men* #55 was already finished when Neal signed on. Certainly the thrust of #55's main story seems to be leading up to unveiling Alex as a mutant; any other revelation at that point would have been a decided anticlimax. Re-read it and you'll see what I mean. Neal and I basically just rode the mutant horse in the direction it was already going.

And while I'm happy in retrospect to count Neal as co-plotter of the issues we did together (and I'd have changed the billing to "by Roy Thomas and Neal Adams" anytime he asked, as I'm sure he knows), I had rather a larger part in shaping the storylines of *X-Men* #56-63 than I'm given credit for in *CBA* #3. It's less than accurate to state, as Arlen Schumer phrased it to Neal, "These were your stories that Roy dialogued."

Neal and I usually went to lunch and talked things over. It wasn't a full-blown plot conference. As Neal says, "We would have these conversations and they would never really be involved with the story, but when I would walk away from them, I would feel that I had enough information to put these pieces together."

Maybe, just maybe, that might be partly because I was the other half of those conversations, and exercised a bit of subtle editorial and co-writer guidance in between pizza and coffee. Naturally, if Neal had requested a full-blown plot, he would have had it; I was doing written synopses for many of the comics I was scripting at that time. It wasn't important to me that the stories be "my" stories; I was content that they would be "our" stories—Neal's and mine—and if Neal wanted to take the ball and run with it, I was willing to let him, even if it wasn't my usual or preferred method of working.

Neal Adams' thumbnails from pp. 14-17 of X-Men *#62. Original size: 8½" x 11" Neal would use a artograph machine to enlarge the images and trace his final pencils on regular-size art boards. X-Men & Ka-Zar ©1999 Marvel Entertainment*

I couldn't be much happier with Neal's generous appraisal of my dialoguing skills, but the impression given in the interview that I did little more than stroll in at the end and dialogue those stories inaccurately discounts my prior contributions. And I don't mean just co-plotting.

For, though this wasn't touched on in the interview: If I was perhaps less than the total writer of those issues, I was also operating in a *second* capacity that I deliberately underplayed in my conversations with Neal. Namely, though most definitely subject to Stan Lee, by then I served as the *de facto* editor of the comics I wrote, and that complicated my relationship with Neal, perhaps more than he initially noticed

I was his partner in creation, yes, and proud to be so. Who wouldn't be? But I was also part of management—a stand-in for Stan, who had little direct input on those *X-Men* issues except in terms of the covers. If Neal got a bit less credit on our stories together than he deserved—hey, guess what! So did *I!* (And, like he says, neither one of us worried about it at the time)

One of the problems of reconstructing verbal history is that, inevitably, people remember their own parts in events rather more clearly (though not always more accurately) than they do the roles played by others. There's no reason that either Neal or I should be less human than others in that regard. All each of us can do, of course, is tell our respective versions of the story as accurately and as truthfully as we can. For the most part, our remembrances will underscore, or at least complement, each others'.

On occasion, however, our memories may be quite different—or even diametrically opposed.

For instance, it's my recollection that, at the very least, I was in on the decision to move the action to Egypt in #56. After all, a few years earlier in St. Louis, through the influence of a college prof who was tutoring me privately in hieroglyphics, I had been accepted to study Egyptology at the University of Chicago, even if I'd had to beg off due to lack of funds. My idea for #56, however, was simply that the action take place off in the Egyptian desert somewhere, at some archeological dig.

Not many days later, I walked into one of the several-person cubicles at Marvel and saw Neal penciling the splash page—which featured nothing less than Abu Simbel, the monumental temple which had recently been transported bodily to make way for the Aswan Dam.

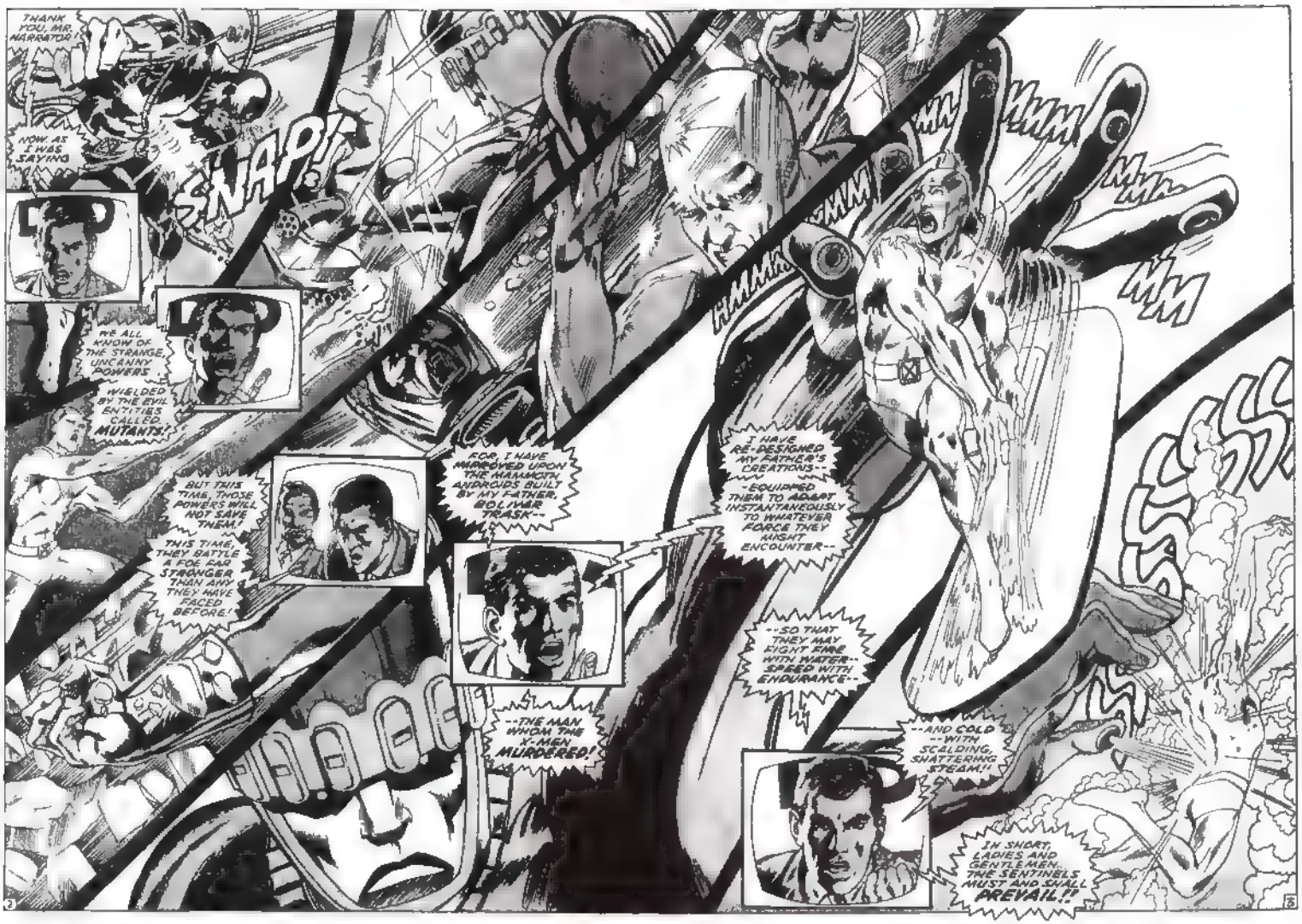
Unknown to Neal, I shared his interest in Abu Simbel. *Circa* 1963 I had attended a lecture in which John A. Wilson of Chicago U.'s famous Oriental Institute pleaded the cause of raising money to save Abu Simbel. I was thrilled to be introduced to this renowned Egyptologist, and even donated the few bucks I could spare to the cause.

Though I hadn't intended that any specific site be used in *X-Men* #56, Neal was drawing Abu Simbel so well that I wasn't about to complain. What most impressed me was that, using a photo tacked up to the drawing board, he was adding all the details free-hand—and they looked as real as the photograph! That, combined with the graceful realism of the Angel's spreading wings on the same splash, would clearly say to all of Marveldom: "Something new has been added to the X-Men!"

And it had been.

Actually, there were *two* new somethings. The other was inker Tom Palmer, who had recently added so much to Gene Colan's and my *Dr. Strange*. That run of the title had, alas, failed (undeservedly, from our viewpoint); so Tom was free to become the perfect inker for Neal Adams.

I was continually knocked out by the pencils I received from Neal on *X-Men*—and having worked by now with the likes of Colan, Buscema, and others, I was less easily impressed than I would have been a few years


THANK YOU, MR. NARRATOR!
NOW, AS I WAS SAYING
SNAP!
WE ALL KNOW OF THE STRANGE, UNCANNY POWERS
WIELDED BY THE EVIL ENTITIES CALLED MUTANTS!
BUT THIS TIME, THOSE POWERS WILL NOT SAVE THEM!
THIS TIME, THEY BATTLE A FOE FAR STRONGER THAN ANY THEY HAVE FACED BEFORE!
FOR, I HAVE MARROWED UPON THE MAMMOTH ANDROIDS BUILT BY MY FATHER, BOLIVAR TRASK--
--THE MAN WHOM THE X-MEN MURDERED!
I HAVE RE-DESIGNED MY FATHER'S CREATIONS--
--EQUIPPED THEM TO ADAPT INSTANTANEOUSLY TO WHATEVER FORCE THEY MIGHT ENCOUNTER--
--SO THAT THEY MAY FIGHT FIRE WITH WATER--SPEED WITH ENDURANCE--
--AND COLD --WITH SCALDING, SHATTERING STEAM!!
IN SHORT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE SENTINELS MUST AND SHALL PREVAIL!!

Great double-page spread by Adams & Palmer for X-Men #58 featuring The Beast and Iceman's futile struggle against the Sentinels. ©1999 Marvel Entertainment

earlier. In that first 15-pager alone there were powerfully realistic faces which brought the X-Men alive in a whole new way—a truly dramatic debut of the Living Monolith—even a beautifully-detailed camel that added to the atmosphere. I saw at once that Neal would stint at nothing.

The only sour note was the cover.

Neal did a fantastic illustration that Stan and I both loved, with the X-Men bound to the letters of the book's logo, held aloft by the Living Monolith. (That drawing was printed, and not for the first time, in *CBA* #3.) However, publisher Martin Goodman was having none of it. "I can't read the logo," the word came back. "Get a different cover!" It was not a judgment from which there was any appeal.

So Neal drew a second cover, with the Monolith holding an empty logo. (We didn't dare have the logo *cracking*—our esteemed publisher wouldn't have liked that, either.) Good as that second version was, it didn't have the impact of the rejected version.

And unfortunately, according to an interview Neal gave several years later, Goodman's arbitrary decree had more of a negative effect on him than it should have. Neal indicated that, afterward, he tended not to give much thought to the *X-Men* covers.

Understandable—but decidedly the wrong reaction, of course, since the cover is generally the most important page of a comic from a sales point of view. Still, I don't think Neal ever really had quite the cavalier attitude toward *X-Men* covers that he suggested in that interview, for his covers continued to be noteworthy, and occasionally downright inspired.

Storywise, things got better and better. In #57 we brought back the Sentinels, the anti-mutant robots of the last Lee-Kirby *X-Men* outing, and Neal proceeded to make them his own. Increasingly, he began to toss in distinctive page layouts which would have been anathema at Marvel a bit earlier. Like Jim Steranko, he was part innovator, part assimilator of the almost lost traditions of Will Eisner and other earlier creators.

Up to this point I'd been happy to keep the lead feature to 15 pages, because of Neal's DC commitments. I didn't want to do anything to cause us deadline problems, since sales figures of the Thomas/Adams/Palmer issues wouldn't even start coming in for several months.

However, when Neal said he'd like to use the whole twenty pages of each issue, I didn't fight it. And with #58 we moved into high gear.

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

The issue started off with a Sentinel attacking Iceman and the Beast, and included a marvelous two-page spread. Amid the assault, Neal interspersed images of Sentinel-master Simon Trask on TV, allowing me to have him commenting on action he doesn't see. That sequence may not look startlingly original *now*, thirty years later, but at the time it was a minor innovation, just one more thing that got *X-Men* noticed. To see how new any scripting or artistic innovation is, one has to look at comics published *before* it, and only then at those published *afterward*.

Neal was responding to the fact that at Marvel, as opposed to DC, he didn't work from a full script, with captions and dialogue already determined, but was free to break down the story in his own way. It was a challenge he rose to magnificently.

Of course, had I given him a short written synopsis as I gave most artists at that time, he would still have been free to make his layouts just as offbeat and original and impressive; they would merely have been of different precise actions. Would those hypothetical *X-Men* issues have had less impact? more? the same? There's no way of knowing.

Neal is correct in suspecting Stan was less than thrilled with some of his

non-standard layouts in *X-Men*; that's why he laid out *Thor* quite more conservatively when he worked with Stan later. However, while Stan would wince at some of Neal's more audacious and unclear page breakdowns, he accepted my judgment that I could make them work by the way I laid out balloons and captions. (I had done something similar the year before with Gene Colan's *Dr Strange* pencils.) But if Stan had been called on to script those *X-Men* pages, I suspect he and Neal would have butted heads in very short order. Much as I admired Stan, I wanted to be a bit more flexible in the way I allowed artists to break down pages.

(And it paid off. For instance, I believe the pages of Neal's aborted early-'80s X-Men graphic novel seen in *CBA* #3, lovely as they are, pale by comparison with the work he did in 1968-69, when I allowed him more freedom than other Marvel editors would give him later. I don't mind admitting I'm proud of that fact.)

The high point of #58 was Neal's design of what remains one of the great super-hero costumes—that of Alex Summers, whom I code-named Havok, after a line from *Julius Caesar*: "Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war!": a solid blackness, which seems to visibly swallow the light—and Neal's wonderfully unique touch, instead of the usual chest symbol, of a series of concentric circles which monitored his outlay of power, thus helping him keep his dangerous energy level in check. Neal made this expanding/contracting series of white circles visible from any angle, as if readers were actually seeing the interior of Alex's body—and it was a *black cosmos*.

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

Again a single sour note: Whatever his attitude toward covers at this point, Neal turned in a real beauty for *X-Men* #58, with a color-held overlay of Havok as the focal point. Alas, Neal's suggested color scheme wasn't followed. Instead of the blue that would have been the closest equivalent of the black in his costume inside, it was decided (by whom I dunno, but it wasn't *me*, babe) that the Havok figure should be color-held in orange and yellow. Bad idea.

Still, we were really cooking now. With #58 Neal even tossed a title onto the splash page: "Do or Die, Baby!" I wasn't wild about it (and Stan, when he saw it, liked it far less), but I used it because I wanted to continue to encourage Neal to contribute in any creative way he felt like. What did it matter if Roy the writer came up with the title or not? Roy the acting editor made the decision whether or not to use it.

When Neal drew caricatures of popular newscasters Chet Huntley and David Brinkley, there wasn't a reader who owned a TV who could fail to recognize them. If he'd drawn for *Mad* magazine, he'd have given Mort Drucker a run for his money.

Neal also tossed in a few psychedelic effects, which were all the rage in those days, plus one of the most powerful panels to date of Cyclops blasting away. As Gil Kane would later express it (and I hope I'm paraphrasing him correctly), Neal was taking the Kirby dramatics and overlaying them with an illustrative technique which, however melodramatic, made the drawings *seem* even more realistic than they *were*. He was marrying Kirby and magazine illustration, and the result would influence comics for decades to come.

©1999 Marvel Entertainment.

The ending of our Sentinels saga was a memorable one. How does one get rid of the irresistible, immovable object?

At that time Chris Claremont, who would become the major force behind the success of the revived *X-Men* in the 1970s and '80s, was apparently working at Marvel as an "intern" (though I don't recall us using that term then), and has said he suggested the ending we used: pitting the Sentinels' own super-logical minds against them by pointing out to them that the ultimate source of the mutations they were programmed to abolish was the sun, so that they would fly into the face of old Sol itself and be destroyed.

BLAZING ITS PATH THRU SPACE MORE THAN 93 MILLION MILES FROM EARTH, THE SUN POSSESSES A DIAMETER OF 865,400 MILES. ITS SURFACE TEMPERATURE IS 6000° CENTIGRADE. ITS MASS ALMOST 700 TIMES THAT OF ALL OTHER BODIES IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM...!
ON THE SURFACE OF THIS WORLD OF SOLAR WINDS... OF MOMENT-TO-MOMENT THERMONUCLEAR CATACLYSM...A HANDFUL OF HUMANOID FORMS WILL MAKE BUT THE MOST IMPERCEPTIBLE OF RIPPLES /
9
Whether conceived by Adams, Thomas, or Claremont, the climax of X-Men *#59 was... radiant. ©1999 Marvel Entertainment.*

I've no reason to question Chris' sincerity, but I don't consciously recall his being involved in any way with *X-Men* #59. Certainly it always seems odd to me to see him listed in recent reprintings as "co-plotter"—a term I feel would be a bit strong even if he did contribute that single idea.

I may be wrong, but my own suspicion is that Chris may be confusing *X-Men* #59 with the fact that later, in 1972, he definitely did submit a detailed plot idea which I utilized (and credited) in the *third* Sentinels epic, in *Avengers* #102-104, as I wound up my 70-issue scripting run on that title.

Neal, for his part, feels *very* strongly that the sun-death concept was *his* idea, not Chris' or mine, and that he'd had it two issues earlier!

Me? I have no recollection *which* of the three of us had that particular brainstorm.

Oh well, we'd have gotten rid of the Sentinels one way or another. But this was an exceptionally *good* method. And Neal's full-page drawing of the Sentinels flying lemming-like, in a long, gracefully curving line, into a sun drawn so large that it cannot be fully contained within the page's borders, is, in its inspired simplicity, perhaps the most memorable single illustration in the entire series.

I'm obliged to Neal for his gracious comments in *CBA* #3 on my scripting of that page. He has correctly gauged my reasoning, as he has in so many cases in the interview when analyzing why I wrote what I wrote.

For some reason, I remember sitting in front of a blaring TV as I scribbled out that pair of captions in longhand—*two* things I rarely did when scripting. The inspiration for the captions, and their flat tone, was an astronomer's lecture given in L.A.'s Griffith Observatory in the 1955 Nicholas Ray/James Dean film *Rebel without a Cause*, one of my all-time favorites. (In 1981 Dann and I would even be married outside Griffith Observatory—though, oddly, it was *her* idea.)

YAAARRHH!
I CAN BEAR...NO MORE!
BUT, EVEN BREAKING CONTACT...DOES NOT STOP THE PAIN...
...THE PAIN OF SURGING ANABOLITE...WHERE ONCE THERE WERE NONE!...
FIERCE TALONS OF PAIN...THAT SCRAPE MY BACK, BRINGING FORTH...LEATHERY WINGS!
MY BODY...MY FACE...MY VERY SOUL...
THEY ARE CHANGED...TRANSFORMED...FILLED WITH A BURSTING, BILLOWING POWER...
...POWER FOR GOOD...OR POWER FOR EVIL!
AND, I CHOOSE...EVIL!
AN EVIL SO GREAT...SO MONUMENTAL THAT ONLY ONE NAME IN ALL THE ANNALS OF LITERATURE WILL CONTAIN IT!
...THE NAME OF...SAURON!!!
THE NAME OF TOLKIEN'S ULTIMATE VILLAIN...
...THAT DARK LORD WHO PERSONIFIED EVIL...WHO WAS TRULY EVIL INCARNATE...!

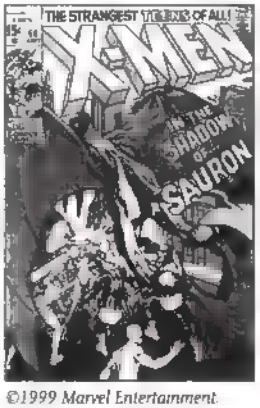
Call him Man-Pterodactyl! Sauron makes his choice in this Adams/Palmer page from X-Men #60. Words by Roy Thomas. ©1999 Marvel Entertainment.

Meanwhile, we had come up with a fabulous idea for the villain of *X-Men* #60 and beyond.

Man-Bat!

Well, no, not Man-Bat, exactly. At least, our character wouldn't have been *called* that. But he would have looked virtually identical to that Batman creepy-crawly, some time before Man-Bat was even a gleam in Frank Robbins' eye.

For, whichever of us came up with the precise idea (I thought I did, but I won't argue the point), Neal and I agreed that we wanted to have the X-Men fight—a vampire.



©1999 Marvel Entertainment

Not a *true* vampire, mind you—in 1969 the Comics Code still didn't allow the use of vampires, werewolves, and the like—but a *psychic* vampire. One that fed on the *emotions* of humans, rather than on their blood. There have been many such super-baddies since then, but few (if *any*) before. And, to visually underscore our point, we wanted our new villain to look like a *human bat*, which would suggest to our readers that he was, indeed, a vampire, even if we couldn't call him that.

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

My recollection is that I felt it behooved me as "line editor" as well as writer to check things out with the Code Authority in advance, lest we get a whole issue drawn and scripted and then be forced to make devastating art changes at the last minute.

Leonard Darvin, administrator of the Code—an attorney I liked personally, though we sometimes disagreed bitterly about mandated changes—said, in effect, "No way, José!"

So Neal and I put our heads together, and one of us came up with the notion of making our psychic vampire look like a humanoid *pterodactyl*. Pterosaurs' wings resembled those of bats, so perhaps we could still make our point, subtly. And I think we did (Even so, I still sigh each time I see a drawing of Man-Bat. Visually, at least, he should have been a Marvel character Neal and I created.)

I named our villain Sauron, after the heavy in J.R.R. Tolkien's then-popular *Lord of the Rings*. That earned us a nasty letter from the trilogy's publisher or lawyer or someone, but of course they had no legal leg to stand on... any more than when I'd named the modern Black Knight's winged mount after another character in the novels. All the same, in retrospect, I wish I had called both by other names. It was just my way of tipping my hat to the Tolkien fans among our readers, even if I was never more than a lukewarm admirer of *Ring*.

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

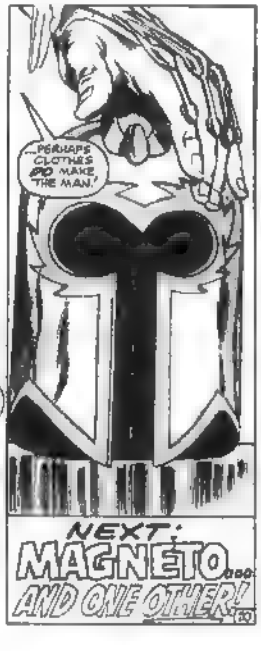
The four-part Sauron story arc had some great moments. Some of my favorite memories of it are personal. I recall, for instance, being faced by an empty white space in a big panel on Page 4 of #60—a space, at least, devoid of anything but a scribbled note from Neal: "Write pretty, Roy!" Neal liked to toss me curves like that, just to see what I'd do with them. I enjoyed the challenge, although, as Neal recounted last issue, when he did the same thing in a *Thor* story a few months later, Stan was decidedly less than appreciative.

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

Neal also sneaked in an homage to TV's Ben Casey on Page 5, hairy forearms and all, since he had done the Casey comic strip. We moved the action to the Savage Land, one of our better notions—though whether it was because (as Neal recalls in *CBA* #3) he wanted to place Magneto there, or because of the natural tie-in of a human pterosaur with Ka-Zar's South Polar kingdom, is a moot point.

One of the best of our outings, certainly commercially, was #62, "Strangers in a Savage Land!" With its huge figures of Ka-Zar and his sabertooth Zabu, that issue's cover eventually made it the best-selling of all the Neal-drawn *X-Men* comics for which he drew the cover. (If that last sentence seems a bit convoluted, read on.) Inside, Neal was still experimenting with psychedelic-style images with little or no black with them, using them creatively for flashbacks.

RRRRRR
NO, AMPHIBIUS!
BUT THEN, WHY SHOULD WE?
THE ANGEL HAS NEVER SEEN ME BEFORE EXCEPT IN MY OWN ALL-CONQUERING COLORS!
PERHAPS IT IS TRUE WHAT THEY SAY...



©1999 Marvel Entertainment

It was heartening to read, in *CBA* #3, Neal's appreciation of my decision, on Page 18 of *X-Men* #62, not to add any captions or dialogue to the five-panel sequence in which Ka-Zar pulls the mutant Piper up from his ledge, stares into his fear-filled eyes, then strides off after having belted him between panels. Actually, I made just one small change to Neal's pencils on that page: The Piper's Pan-pipes weren't seen in the final panel, so I had Tom Palmer draw them

lying shattered next to him.

As many people have told me over the years, perhaps the most memorable moment in #62 occurs in its final panel, when Neal has the mysterious white-haired figure introduced earlier reach down and pick up the helmet of Magneto, thus dramatically revealing his identity—to which I added the balloon: "Perhaps clothes *do* make the man." That kind of synergy is what happens when a couple of creators who respect each other are working together.

At this point, however, mounting deadlines pressures caught up with us. I had been pushed by Marvel's production manager for several months to do a fill-in *X-Men* issue, though I'd have preferred not to; and since Neal's triple commitments at Marvel, DC, and elsewhere never left us much time to spare, at some point I felt I had to acquiesce. But I decided to at least make the fill-in a story I had long wanted to tell.

And so was created the mutant called *Sunfire*.

Very soon after I'd started scripting *X-Men* the first time around in 1967, working with penciler Werner Roth, I had told Stan I wanted to add a *sixth* X-Man—a Japanese whose mother had been radiated by the Hiroshima nuclear blast in 1945 and had thus been born a mutant. (Since at that time it was canonical that the X-Men's parents had all been involved in the Manhattan Project that created the A-bomb, this seemed to me like a natural.)

Whether or not I had the name Sunfire in mind in '67 I don't recall, but in any event Stan definitely nixed the idea, giving several reasons. I disagreed with all of them, but hey, he's The Man. In retrospect, I figure he was right roughly three times commercially for every time he was wrong, and that's a good batting average in *any* league.

But, as per usual with me, I simply bided my time—and, in *X-Men* #64, I finally introduced Sunfire. I didn't try to make him an X-Man right away however—at that point I wasn't thinking long-term enough to be certain I

THE MOST UNUSUAL FIGHTING TEAM OF TIME!..
The MUTANTS and the MONSTER
PROFESSOR X LIVES!! BUT THE STRAIN OF HIS HARD-WON VICTORY OVER THE STAR-SPAWNED ENTITY LINKING MENTAL MINDS OF HALF A PLANET--HAVE TAKEN THEIR MOST DREADFUL TOLL--!
IF ONLY WE KNEW --WILL HE EVER EMERGE FROM HIS COMATOSE STATE, OR--?
DON'T, HANK! DON'T EVEN SAY IT!
HE MUST RECOVER HE MUST!!
IT WOULD BE THE GRIMMEST BOON OF ALL IF HE HAD RETURNED TO US AFTER SO MANY LONG MONTHS--
ONLY TO HAVE HIS GREATEST TRIUMPH ALSO BECOME--HIS FINAL ONE--!
STAN LEE EDITOR
ROY THOMAS WRITER
SAL BUSCEMA ARTIST
SAM GRAINGER, EMBELLISHER
ARTIE SIMEK, LETTERER
AS RECOUNTED LAST ISSUE! -- STAN

Splash page to what would be the last all-new X-Men (#66) for about six years. (Courtesy of Ethan Roberts.) ©1999 Marvel Entertainment

Don Heck's exquisite costume design for Sunfire, from the "in-between" issue, X-Men #64. Inks by Tom Palmer. ©1999 Marvel Entertainment

wanted to bring him into the group any longer—but I did want such a character in the series as a hero-villain.

Don Heck did a sterling job on the penciling, and Tom Palmer masterfully did his damnedest to make the art look as much like an Adams/Palmer job as possible. Sunfire, of course has survived to this day, though (I think) with increasingly uninteresting costumes compared to the way I had Don draw him, swathed in the Rising Sun flag of World War II infamy.

Anyway, I figured, Neal and I would soon be working together on #65.

Little did I know that he and I had done our last *X-Men* together in *#63!*

A bit earlier, Neal had asked if I'd mind if he tried his hand at plotting an issue of *X-Men*. He had a particular story in mind, about a space invasion and, as it happened, a way to bring Professor X back from the dead.

Though neither of us said so at the time, we both had to be aware that this was a bit of a departure; previously we had always decided on storylines together, however overtly non-directive I may have been in my co-writer and editorial roles. At that time, however, I was writing several other titles per month—*Avengers*, *Sub-Mariner*, *Hulk*, and *Daredevil*, plus the odd extra feature now and then—and had plenty of editorial duties, as well, so I told him to go to it. I figured it would be an interesting experiment; I'd come in later and simply write the dialogue on this one. (See? When I'm only going to dialogue a story, as opposed to plot or co-plot it, I'm quite capable of telling the difference.)

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

Meanwhile, the *X-Men* sales figures I'd glimpsed on Neal's and my earliest issues weren't especially heartening. Though I probably hadn't yet seen reports on #62 with its Ka-Zar/Zabu cover, the book, if it hadn't further declined in sales, at least had not markedly improved. It was still hanging by a thread.

Thus, being occupied with various other concerns at the time Neal brought in the pencils to #65, I abruptly realized I felt rather distant from this story with which I'd had practically nothing to do to date. I would suspect I checked with Neal about it before I gave the dialoguing to Denny O'Neil, a fellow Missourian I'd helped enter the field in 1965, and whom I wanted to see doing scripts for Marvel again. After all, "Denny O'Neal Adams" had become a tandem sensation on the revamped *Green Lantern* book over at DC (even if sales of that one were probably no better than *X-Men*'s), and it appealed to the competitive side of me to have the two of them working together at Marvel, even just for one issue.

Denny came through nicely on the dialogue, though of course the plot and art would have been 100% identical whether he or I or letterer Jean (Simek) Izzo had scripted the issue.

Confession time. If I'd seen ahead to a day when the *X-Men* stories drawn by Neal would be collected first in one package, then in another, I would definitely have found the time to script #65. Then there would have been an unbroken run of Thomas/Adams/Palmer *X-Men* (not counting the never-reprinted Sunfire origin, of course).

Okay, so these are the "New" X-Men, but still fine work by Neal Adams for an early '80s poster. ©1999 Marvel Entertainment.

I was surprised, reading *CBA* #3, to learn that Neal feels that having the "Professor X" killed back in #42 turn out to have actually been the Changeling was his idea. There's no way either of us can "prove" our versions at this late date, of course. But while Stan and I had intended for Xavier to stay dead, I'd always had it in mind that, if we ever changed our minds, we could indicate that the mutant Changeling (whom I'd created) had died in his place. I remember telling a few people about this possibility soon after Professor X's "death"; I'm sure I mentioned it to Neal, as well, and he has simply forgotten the fact. Otherwise, it's just too amazing a coincidence.

Of course, it was still Neal who cleverly opted, in issue #59, to have the Changeling absent from the bunch of mutants captured by the Sentinels, as a set-up for Xavier's return. A nice subtle touch. And it was Neal who now basically executed the tale which brought Xavier back from the dead, with Stan's and my blessing. Professor X had been killed off simply to try to make an impact and sell a few comics at a time when *X-Men* was sinking in sales; the ploy hadn't worked, and it made sense to undo what had probably been, in retrospect, a mistake.

Be that as it may. Almost as if to underscore the fact that this was to be Neal's last *X-Men*, there was a glitch in the story—and, as usual, it also affected the cover.

Neal had drawn a somewhat dog-like alien thingy attacking the mutants in two panels. He thought of it as a "watchdog," so Denny had Iceman remark, "Stand back, guys! I'm gonna give Fido an ice kennel!" (And I couldn't be happier that at least one thumbnail of that creature survives, as seen in *CBA* #3.)

But when it came time to do the cover, Stan looked at the beast on Page 12 and insisted it be changed to something more humanoid so it could be used on the cover. Probably because of the looming deadline, staffer Marie Severin was drafted to redraw the monster in its two interior panels. Its original canine nature explains why this humanoid monster is awkwardly down on all fours in one panel. This was not one of Stan's better ideas.

And yet...

Marie was also assigned to penci. the cover. I have no memory at this late date if Neal wanted to do the cover, or if he declined to do so under the circumstances. In any event, *X-Men* #65 became one of the two best-selling of Neal's issues (along with #62).

Was it because Marie's cover was perhaps clearer than some of Neal's, in a day when clarity counted for a lot—

—or because Stan insisted that the monster be humanoid (two years later, sales on *Conan the Barbarian* would begin to rise when he insisted on the same thing there)--

—or was it simply that readers were increasingly catching on that something very special was going on in *The X-Men*?

We'll never really *know*. Not even if we think we do.

And anyway, it was already too late.

After doing #65, Neal decided to move on to other pastures, and I have no idea how much of that was due to the experience on that issue, or because I copped out on dialoguing #65, or for a combination of reasons.

Sal Buscema became the new *X-Men* penciler with #66. I guest-starred the Hulk to try to spice up sales. I no longer have any memory of how that issue sold compared to the previous ones. Probably about the same.

With #66 *X-Men* was cancelled—based, of course, on sales going back perhaps half a year. I was getting used to the fact that some of what I considered my best work (*X Men* with Neal, *Sub-Mariner* with John Buscema, *Dr. Strange* with Gene Colan) wasn't selling as well as some of the things I did with far less effort—such as *The Incredible Hulk*, the print run of which was increased at least twice during the very enjoyable, what-the-hel. run that Herb Trimpe and I had together on that book.

However, Neal's and my *X-Men* was far from a total failure. The sales *must* have been creeping upward to some extent, for publisher Goodman almost immediately announced that *X-Men* would return—as a reprint title. He wouldn't have done that if the sales picture had been unrelievedly dark.

So the X-Men stuck around in re-runs. Over the next few years, as editor rather than as writer, I tried three distinct approaches to bringing them back in new stories:

1) They were split up, with the Beast having his own solo series for a time in *Amazing Adventures*. (Stan doubtless had a hand in that decision.)

2) I had the X-Men brought back as super-heroes in civvies (in *Marvel Team-up* #4, Sept. 1972), because I felt they were so distinctive that their silhouettes alone would identify them, and I wanted to take another stab at the no-costumes approach of *Fantastic Four* #1-2. (It didn't make much of a stir this time, either.)

3) Then, near the end of my tenure as editor-in-chief, I suggested the X-Men be brought back as an international grouping of both established and new mutants, and assigned the team of Mike Friedrich and Dave Cockrum.

But Neal Adams and I as a team were history on *The X-Men*—a piece of history, of course, that is reprinted every decade.

Already in the early 1970s a hardcover book reprinting *X Men* #56-59 (more or less) came out in England, though printed in Holland. It had a few odd angles (see illo).

In 1983, Marvel U.S. published three flawed and incomplete but nonetheless welcome volumes entitled *X-Men Classics*, on better paper with better printing. (#56 was not included in this collection, probably because it had been continued from #54-55, which isn't a very good reason.)

And 1996 saw the trade paperback *X-Men. Visionaries 2: The Neal Adams Collection*. Oh, well, if I felt a bit slighted on the cover of that one, at least I got a few bucks in "incentive payments."

Faced with a limited page count, the British collection truncated the final two pages of X-Men #59 into two captions (!) This meant dropping the powerful sun-death page, and shoehorning its two captions onto the preceding page. ©1999 Marvel Ent.

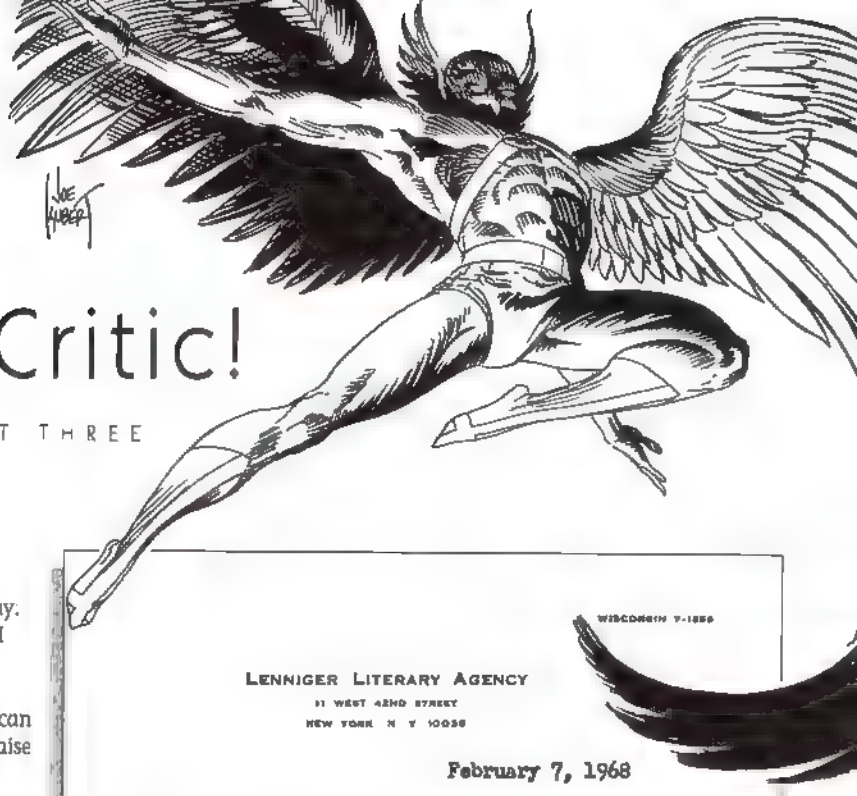
It means a lot more to me that, over the years, Neal has more than once stated publicly that his two favorite collaborators in those days were Denny O'Neil and myself—that he felt he was working with what he considered the best writer then at each company, DC and Marvel.

I don't know about you, but I'll settle for that kind of vote of confidence—*any* day.

And need I reiterate that I consider my work with Neal to be one of the highlights of *my* professional life, as well?

Despite the 1970 demise of *X-Men*, it turned out that Neal and I were destined to do considerably more work together over the next few years.

Read on... after the next pair of articles.



Everybody's A Critic!

THE GARDNER F. FOX LETTERS, PART THREE

by Michael T. Gilbert

As a 25-year comics professional, I've learned one thing the hard way. Everybody has an opinion—and they *love* to share it with you! Every pro I know thrills to the occasional gushing fan letter, or a welcome pat on the back from an appreciative editor.

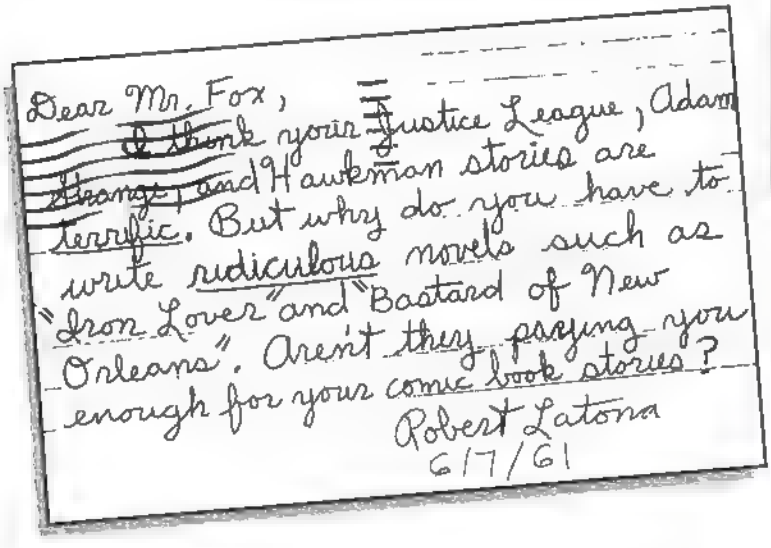
Of course, there's also the other side of the coin. Any comics creator can tell horror stories about editors who get it all wrong—and readers who praise the bad stuff, and pan the good.

The incredibly prolific Gardner F. Fox was no exception.

In my third foray into the Fox archives at the University of Oregon, I'd like to share some of that writer's letters from both his fans and his editors. I've found many of them to be funny and thought-provoking. We've already printed some of DC's "don't-do" list and suggestions for punching up Fox's writing in *A/E* Vol. 2 #2; but even so, we won't lack material.

After all. . . *everybody's a critic!*

1.) Let's start with the ever-popular *"go-for-the-jugular"* critic. Apparently this young man didn't care for Mr. Fox's historical fiction.



Dear Mr. Fox,
~~I think~~ your Justice League, Adam ~~Strange~~ and Hawkman stories are terrific. But why do you have to write ridiculous novels such as "Iron Lover" and "Bastard of New Orleans". Aren't they paying you enough for your comic book stories?
Robert Latona
6/7/61

(P.S.: In all likelihood, Robert, they *weren't* paying Gardner enough! For the record, his comic book page rate in 1938 was a whopping $1 a page. When he left DC in 1968 it had climbed to a magnificent $15 a page. No wonder Fox was prolific—he *had* to be! By the way, the dating (6/7/61) in pencil beneath the signature is by Gardner, and probably represents when he received the postcard.)

2.) If young Robert didn't care for Fox's *historical fiction*, imagine what he'd have said about Fox's *soft-porn* novels! This note from Fox's agent August Lenniger says it all:

LENNIGER LITERARY AGENCY
51 WEST 42ND STREET
NEW YORK N Y 10036

February 7, 1968

Mr. Gardner F. Fox
52 Crotty Avenue
Yonkers 4, New York

Dear Gar,

The Paperback Library check in amount of $1000.00 came through this morning for WHAM, BAM, THANK YOU MA'AM, and thus my check for proceeds of $900.00 goes to you herewith.

Best regards.

Sincerely,
August

AL/nk

enc.ck.

Hawkman ™ & ©1999 DC Comics.

3.) Next we have the classic *"let's-be-pals"* letter, wherein the young fan hopes to become buddies with his comics creator. Once in a while it actually does happen, but not often. Comics writers are a pretty busy bunch, and there are *a lot* of fans! Fox did sent this lucky fan a copy of his latest book.

9/26/62

Dear Mr. Fox:

Thank you very much. I was very glad that your answer was so prompt. I hope that we will become very good friends. Since we do not know each other very well, I will try to inform you about me, first. I am thirteen years old, but I wish I were older so that I could do more and know more. I have a lot of hobbies including 'Comic Book collecting!' I love to swim, and I also bike train. Have you heard of the TOUR OF SOMERVILLE? That's where I live. Someday I hope to become a writer and commercial artist, maybe comic books, too.

Please, write me soon, as I said I wanted to be your friend, I want to be yours....

Your friend,
Alexander Koehn

A sketch of Gardner Fox by young Alexander, based on a drawing in early-60s DC Comics.

Special thanks to Joe Kubert for permission to use the lovely (and unpublished) Hawkman illo which adorns this page (and to Al Dellinges for finding it).

©1999 DC Comics.

At the same time he was one of the writers of the "New Look" Batman, Fox turned out the script for the much-remembered Showcase *#55 (March-April 1965), co-starring Dr. Fate and Hourman. (Art by Murphy Anderson)*

4.) Every so often a critic hits it right on the nose. This 1964 letter from college student Bill Warren came at a watershed time for both DC and Marvel Stodgy, staid DC was beginning to lose its undisputed dominance in the comics market to young Turk Marvel. Old-guard DC writers (and editors) were arrogant in their belief that their plot-heavy stories were superior to the more character-driven stories of their main competitor. Venerable DC writers like Fox were unable or unwilling to change their styles—until it was too late.

In the years after this letter, Fox and most of his fellow DC writers slowly drifted from the very field they had helped build. Marvel took DC's place as the #1 comics publisher, a spot they kept for decades, losing ground only when they grew equally arrogant in their success. Perhaps comics history would've been very different if someone with vision at DC had taken this fan's letter seriously. By the way (in an ironic postscript), Bill's letter was mailed from the *University of Oregon* to DC's offices in New York, only to eventually wind up back at the U. of O.—in their Gardner Fox collection! Small world, eh?

[**ADDENDUM FROM ROY:** *Smaller than even you knew when you wrote this article, Michael! Bill Warren now lives in Los Angeles, and has been a very good friend of mine ever since we met in 1976 soon after I moved to L.A.! I wonder if he remembers writing this letter on December 10, 1964....*]

Dear Sirs,

A couple of years back, I wrote a letter asking why you did not put more characterization into your stories. I received an answer that said, in part, "because of the speed at which the plot must travel, there is no room for characterization." Besides, you said, it would be wasted on the age-group that reads your magazines.

This answer satisfied me until I began looking into Marvel comics. They are very probably appealing to the same age group as your National Comics, and the plots travel, if anything, even faster. But Stan Lee has made every single one of his characters, heroes and villains, into a character. Sure, the characterizations are overdrawn and, at times, painfully corny (witness The Thing)—but, dammit, they *are* characterizations. If you exchanged brains between *any* of your heroes, from, for example, Superman to Aquaman, from Green Lantern to the Atom, from Batman to Wonder Woman, the results would be exactly the same as before. This is most definitely not the case in Lee's comics.

So, why don't I stick to Lee's comics? Because I like yours better—or, rather, I *want* to like yours better.

You can't tell me that Gardner Fox or John Broome or *Edmond Hamilton* isn't capable of characterizing a hero. The first and last of this three do it with facility in their novels. All it takes is some dialogue tricks, which is all Lee uses. (Granted, he has some damned fine artists working for him; but so do you. Carmine Infantino is *the* best in the business, and Curtis Swan, once he develops a *style* instead of relying on technique, can be the best in the business. But it is the editor who decides these things, I am sure. Hell, not even SUPERMAN has a character! They are all Good while the villains are all Bad.

Couldn't you do something? Not to insult you, but to show you what I mean, here are the charactizations... drawn from Marvel characters... that seem most reasonable to me for my favorite characters in your stable to have: *Superman*, has to be the weight-of-the-world-on-his-shoulders genius type, like Mr. Fantastic of the Fantastic Four; *Batman*, the thoughtful but daring detective who cracks jokes occasionally, like Daredevil; *The Atom* should be something on the order of the derivative Giant-Man—a dedicated scientist who also cracks jokes (cracking jokes helps characterizations immensely). In short, he should be more of an adult Spiderman [sic]....

Hope I haven't made anyone angry. I've done that before with a letter to *Castle of Frankenstein* monster-movie magazine that assumed that they knew of the existence of [Forrie] Ackerman's magazine [*Famous Monsters of Filmland*]. They were very indignant. I merely assume you keep up with the competition. (Tell me, just how heated is it? Do you spit on the sidewalks as you pass each other? Or do you all go down to the bar for a beer after office hours and laugh at us idiot kids—I'm 21, senior in English lit at the University of Oregon—who take comics so seriously?)

Thank you so very much for the entertainment you provide; but I'll always hope you improve.

Sincerely yours,
Bill Warren

The Flash!
BY GARDNER FOX AND E·E·HIBBARD
JAY GARRICK NEVER GOES ANYWHERE OR DOES ANYTHING WITHOUT FINDING SUDDENLY THAT THERE IS A NEED FOR HIM TO APPEAR IN HIS OTHER IDENTITY .... AS —
THE FLASH!
COWBOY JACK CROFTS IS ABOUT TO BULLDOG A REAR CROSSED STEER ....
WE ARE IN NEW YORK SQUARE GARDEN, WHERE THE ANNUAL RODEO IS IN PROGRESS
!

©1999 DC Comics

Gardner Fox, along with Jerry Siegel, was one of the few headlined writers of the Golden Age. Credit for artists like E.E. Hibbard was more common.

5.) The following letter is noteworthy for two reasons: First, the kid who wrote it must be the only kid living in America in 1942 who *didn't* want more stories showing the super-heroes kicking the living crap out of the Nazis! Secondly, it's the *earliest* comic book fan letter in the Fox collection, and a rare example of a DC fan letter from the Golden Age. By the way, I like the idea of little Andrew enclosing a dime for a copy of *All-Flash #5*—currently worth about $800 in mint. Not a bad investment!

March 12, 1942

Dear Mr. Fox,

I think that your new Flash comic-book no. 4 was the best. I mean the All-Flash one. It was one of the most enjoyable ones I've read in a long time. It had none of that uninteresting "trash" about those Germans. It is a good book because it does not say anything about this war we are in. That is the kind of a story that I enjoy.

I congratulate you on the way you did that novel. The going back in time idea wasn't particulary original but the way you did it was, absolutely. I hope that in the present your All-Flash stories will be as interesting.

I have an idea for a story for your next All-Flash comic-book. Here is my idea, I think it is original too. I'd like to tell how the Flash and his girl happen to accidently [sic] stumble onto the amazing Fairyland. While they are there they help the Fairy Queen in a great difficulty. The Flash has to make the gnomes stop their trouble-making against the Fairy Queen. They have many unusual adventures in Fairyland then. (I hope you use this idea. I'm sure many children and grown-ups would enjoy it.)

I am enclosing a dime for the #5 issue of All-Flash Comics when it comes out next. I am hoping it will be about what I told you. (My birthday falls on May 4, so send me the #5 issue of All-Flash so that I will receive it on that day.)

Yours truly,
Andrew Tavlarion

P.S.: I hope that you will send me an autographed picture of the Flash.

[NOTE FROM ROY: *This letter is even more astonishing than Michael suspected when he sent it to me! Naturally, by the time the then-quarterly* All-Flash *#4 was on sale, it was far too late to affect #5. But, only a few issues down the line, the cover feature of* All-Flash *#8 (Jan.-Feb. 1943) was a multi-part story called—"The Formula to Fairyland!" Coincidence? Not likely! The actual storyline did not use the precise elements young Andrew had envisioned—though giants, Cinderella, a wicked witch, and Puss in Boots all played a part. It all turned out to be "just a story" Jay (Flash) Garnick was telling to a sick boy named Jimmy; but of course at the end we get the idea the adventure had actually happened.*

6.) Fans weren't the only critics. Editors can be hell, too—especially if they're *right!* The following letter is from some unnamed 1940s pulp-magazine editor, regarding one of Fox's "Wild West" pulp stories.

> Re Gardner Fox —I've made marginal notes on some of the weaknesses and inconsistencies therein. Aside from these, Hatfield accomplishes none of the things he sets out to do —(1) to find what became of the two rangers who have disappeared (2) to find who was doing the looting in Mexico, and (3) to prevent a range war —except inadvertently by the fortuitous confession of the dying villain in the end, wherein the solutions of the first two are handed him on a silver platter, so to speak. As for the third, with the shooting that busts out all over, it seems his efforts to prevent a range war also go for naught. The blind man villain is particularly bad, since this would seem to give a man of Hatfield's capabilities tremendous advantage, and I'm afraid the readers' sympathies would go to the handicapped one. In any case, a blind man could scarcely be considered a worthy adversary for our peerless boy and his stainless-steel biceps

Ouch! The editor didn't pull any punches. Me—I'd pay good money just to see Fox's cowboy hero, "stainless steel biceps" Hartfield, beat up that mean old blind man! *Wotta fight! Wotta fight!*

7.) This letter to Fox's agent doesn't sound quite as bad. "Julius Schwartz". *"Julius Schwartz."* Hmmm -that name sounds kind of *familiar* ...

THURMAN T. SCOTT President
MALCOM REISS Gen'l Mgr.
JACK BYRNE Mgr. Editor
ARCH C. ROBINSON, Asst. Mgr.

Telephone:
PLAZA 5-9755

FICTION HOUSE, Inc.
Publishers
670 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

May 17, 1946

Mr. Julius Schwartz
255 East 188th Street
New York, New York

Dear Julius:

I believe the revision on SPACE OF FLAME by Gardner F. Fox is an improvement on the original draft. Especially the opening. While it still leaves one slightly mystified in places it is an enjoyable story and I believe our readers will like it. However in the future it might be a good idea to keep the stories he does for PLANET a trifle simpler. Shall we send you a check for two hundred and sixty-three dollars?

We have another story of Foxes, THE VEIL OF VALMOORA. Much of it I liked but there was something about it that didn't ring quite true. Since we are pretty well bought up on science-fiction I believe it will be best for us to let this one go. I'm sure you will have no trouble selling it elsewhere for Fox is really a first-rate science-fiction writer.

Best regards,
Malcolm Reiss
Malcolm Reiss
General Manager

MR:kh

8.) If the fans aren't busy *criticizing* their favorite writers, they're busy taking over their *jobs!* Here's a pretty cute idea from Miss "Casey Jones"! (And she's even willing to let Gardner share part of the credit.)

Dear Sir:

Help! I'm writing & drawing a new comic, but I can't seem to tie my ideas together.

"ROBIN'S GIRL FRIEND,'THE CHAMELEON'"

The story so far: Cameo Craig (who looks like Tuesday Weld) is orphaned by a fire, & adopted by Kathy Kane, who announces the fact at a party. Also at this party, the kids decide to dance in the dark & are interrupted by a scream, then discover Kathy's butler has been murdered. Batman & Robin arrive, and find a Joker card impaled on a knife, in the dead man. Suspecting the worst, the start off on the trail of the Joker (who has broken jail), and also a gang who have threatened to 'expose' Kathy Kane as Batwoman.

My problem is this:—I want to show Batman & Robin trailing the Joker to a waterfront hideout, getting captured, & being rescued by Batwoman, Batgirl, & the Chameleon (Cameo Craig); then have Robin fall in love with the Chameleon; show Batgirl being heartbroken & jealous by turns; have Robin & the Chameleon run off & get married, only to find out that it wasn't legal & realize how lucky they were— at the same time definitely leaving the impression that they will get married for real some day.

Also, I'm trying to get a secondary story line to tie all these ideas together in a convincing, entertaining, three-part 'novel.' Can you help me do this?

The credits on the title page would read "Story & Art by Casey Jones—with Gardner Fox. Thanks in advance for any help you can offer. Yours sincerely,

(Miss) Casey Jones

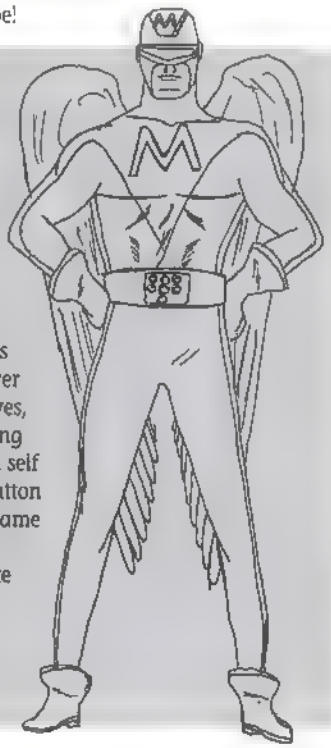
9/23/61

9.) Then there are the budding artists. This 1961 letter has a new super-hero thrown in for good measure. *What a deal!* Mark's next hero? *"Good-spelling Man"* -we hope!

Dear,Sir

I enjoy Green Lantern alot and I think you should give G.L. more credit for his powers. Have a story were all the G.L.'s fight a monster from another galaxy who will destroyed there's. But use all the G.L.'s in some book. Now about hero to the left his name is Multy Man. on the belt he has seven button by pushing one of these button he has a different power. Powers are mind over mattor, duplicating ray, laser beem eyes, fliying by means of his wings, changing his size up to 75 feet tall, turning him self into an electron wave, and the last button will give him these powers all at the same time that's all for him. I colect Green Lantern and Hawkman that you write and I think there grate.

Your truly
Mark Kasianowicz



The Fox and the Fans

10.) Info on the Golden Age heroes was hard to come by in 1961. Here's one fan who was *dying* to find out—*figuratively*, we hope!

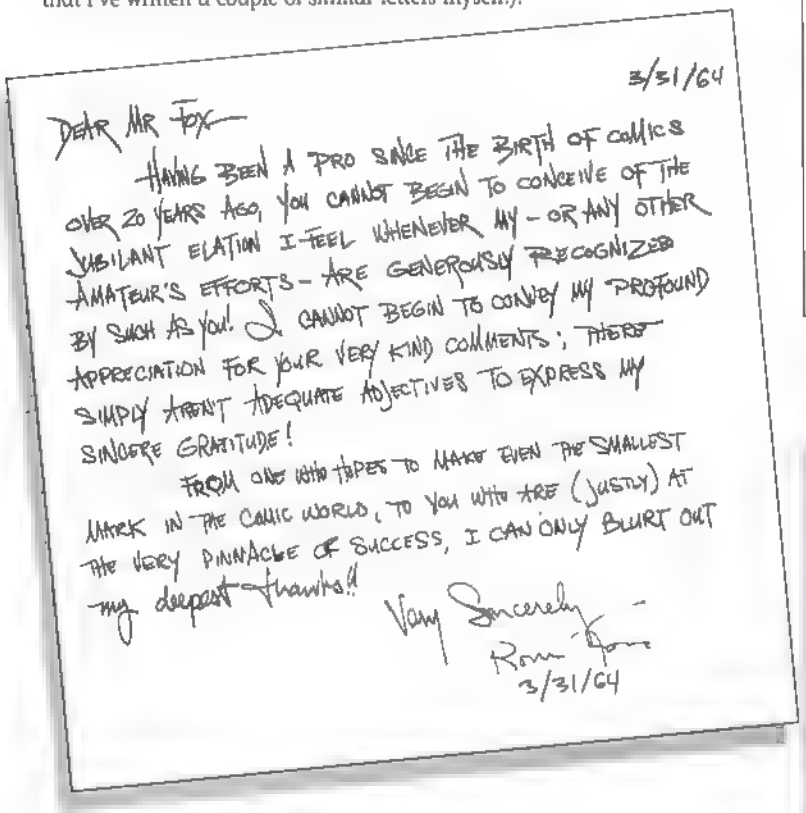
Dear Mr. Fox,

I'm thirteen years of age and regret that I weren't born thirty years ago. You see, I just love G.L., Flash, and Wonder Woman. I have a collection of all the G.L.s and J.L.A.s that have been published so far. (I just bought the Hawkman comic.) The point that I'm trying to get at is that in the Mail Dept. of most of the heroes I hear of these old time fans. I've mailed letters to Wonder Woman, G.L., Flash, and the J.L.A. trying desperately to get some old J.S.A. pictures. But I've failed completely. I've recently thought of sending you a letter.

Please don't let me down. If too much, just send me a sketch of the Atom, Black Canary, Dr. Fate, and a picture of you. If you don't send me a return letter of the sketches and the picture I'll *die* of failure.

One of your everloving fans,
Augie Guzman Jr.

11.) Some fans lay the praise on a bit thick, even when it's obviously sincere. Former *Alter Ego* editor *Ronn Foss* was clearly delighted that Fox liked one of his issues. I love Ronn's youthful enthusiasm (and blush to admit that I've written a couple of similar letters myself!).



3/31/64

DEAR MR FOX—

HAVING BEEN A PRO SINCE THE BIRTH OF COMICS OVER 20 YEARS AGO, YOU CANNOT BEGIN TO CONCEIVE OF THE JUBILANT ELATION I FEEL WHENEVER MY - OR ANY OTHER AMATEUR'S EFFORTS - ARE GENEROUSLY RECOGNIZED BY SUCH AS YOU! I CANNOT BEGIN TO CONVEY MY PROFOUND APPRECIATION FOR YOUR VERY KIND COMMENTS; THERE SIMPLY AREN'T ADEQUATE ADJECTIVES TO EXPRESS MY SINCERE GRATITUDE!

FROM ONE WHO HOPES TO MAKE EVEN THE SMALLEST MARK IN THE COMIC WORLD, TO YOU WHO ARE (JUSTLY) AT THE VERY PINNACLE OF SUCCESS, I CAN ONLY BLURT OUT MY DEEPEST THANKS!!

VERY SINCERELY YOURS,
RONN FOSS
3/31/64

12.) Of course, the smart writer takes the gush in stride, as it's often followed by a not-so-subtle request for an original!

March 20, 1962

Dear Mr. Fox:

Did my heart leap with job with I spotted your name on an envelope, sticking out of my mailbox. I was so surprised that I got weak in the knees and stood as if I were paralyzed, suddenly. I walked up to the mailbox and gently lifted your letter out of my box, then handling it with extreme care I took it into my house to read and as I did, tears started to burst from my light eyes and I felt them slowly running down my smiling cheeks.

My poor heart was overflowing with Love, Admiration, + Gratitude to you, Mr. Fox, and I fully understood every word in your letter. You're right, we really enjoy reading and praising your Great Works and you can be sure we'll continue to do so, Sir. It would be an Injustice, not to do so 'cause the gifted talents of the DC staff certainly deserve praise and awards of all kinds mentionable, Sir....

Planet That Came To a Standstill is indeed Overwhelming in Scope, Realism, and Suspense. I never enjoyed a novel so different in all my Life. I wish there were a Sequel to it, as it still left me flabbergasted (Astounded). Wish I had the Original Manuscript on it and a few of your other Gems. But I don't know if you are allowed to do so, are you??? Please let me know.

If I had some of your Original Manuscripts, it could help my writing career tremendously, Sir, so I'm sure you understand what I mean.

Sincerely Your Friend;
Nicholas. P. Debelo. Age 33.

P.S.: If you do send me *any* Manuscripts, *please* autograph them for me.

Later in 1964, Ronn worked with a Missouri high school teacher named Roy Thomas on an authorized adaptation of Fox's Burroughsesque novel Warrior of Llarn. *This page of preparatory sketches by Foss was printed in Roy's final fan-issue of* Alter Ego *(Vol. 1, #9, May-August 1965), and never since.*

13.) Now *here's* a variation on a theme! Maybe Vic should've addressed the 1966 letter excerpted below to *"Gardner's Rent-a-Script"*:

Dear Sir:

I am twenty years old and I am an amateur cartoonist. For about two years, I have been trying to sell my creations to various newspaper syndicates.... I wonder if it would be possible for you to lend me one of your scripts for ten days? After I study it for script format, I will gratefully return it to you with ten dollars.

Sincerely yours,
Victor Plajas

14.) Fox took his fans seriously—and they loved him for it!

Dear Mr. Fox,

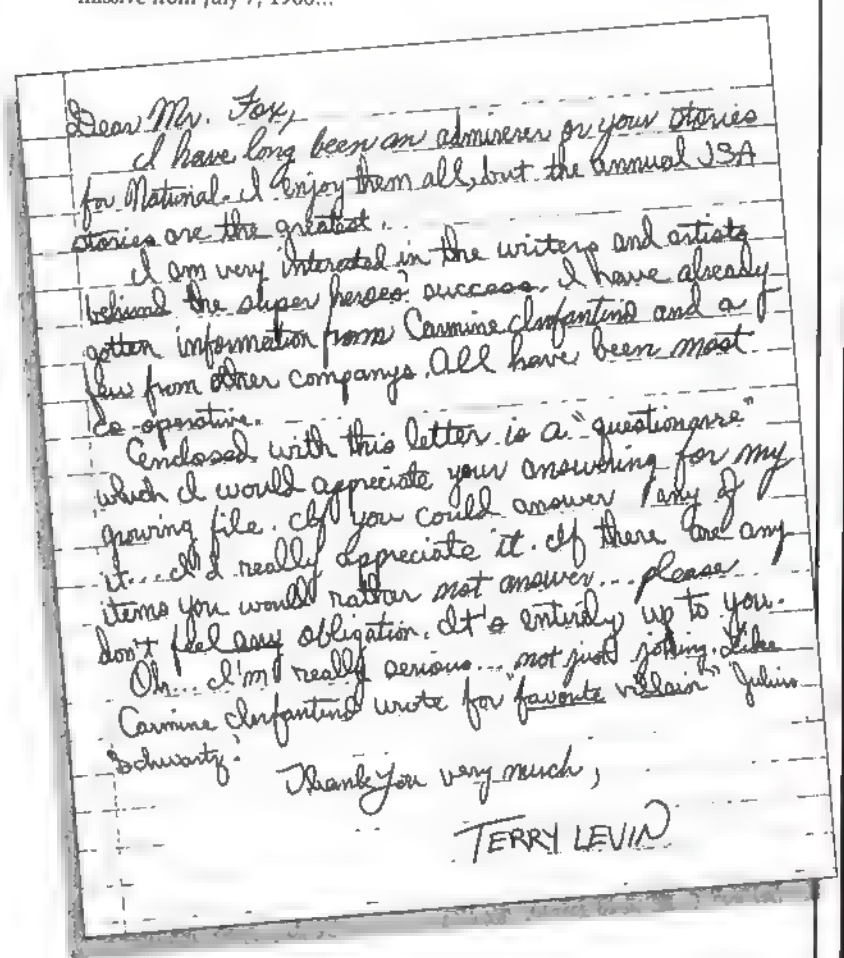
I just thought I'd drop you a line, and tell you how grateful William and I are for your great courtesy and warmth.

First you granted an interview right away without knowing anything about William and I except that we wanted an interview. This was enough for you. Few if any of those we have interviewed or tried to interview were as gracious as you were or even 1/10 as warm and friendly.

Again let me express our sincere thanks for the interview, and for you, just being you. We wish ever continuing success in the future.

Sincerely yours,
Angel Marcano

15.) Everyone loves to find out info about their favorite stars. Of course, the stars don't always take the questions *entirely* seriously. For instance, this missive from July 7, 1966...



Dear Mr. Fox,

I have long been an admirer of your stories for National. I enjoy them all, but the Annual JSA stories are the greatest.

I am very interested in the writers and artists behind the super heroes' success. I have already gotten information from Carmine Infantino and a few from other companys. All have been most co-operative.

Enclosed with this letter is a "questionaire" which I would appreciate your answering for my growing file. If you could answer any of it...it'd really appreciate it. If there are any items you would rather not answer...please don't feel any obligation. It's entirely up to you. Oh...I'm really serious...not just joking. Like Carmine Infantino wrote for favorite villain "Julius Schwartz."

Thank you very much,

TERRY LEVIN

We'll let Carmine have the last word, and end the chapter here. (Julie Schwartz was Gardner's DC editor, of course!) As always, your comments on our Gardner Fox series will be both welcome and expected. After all (as we all know)—*everybody's a critic!*

*[***Michael T. Gilbert** *is the creator of Mr. Monster, who graces this issue's cover, and the author/artist of* The Complete Wraith, *still on sale at better outlets. He is still seeking copies of correspondence to and from Gardner F. Fox, on behalf of the University of Oregon; material sent to the editor will be forwarded to him.]*

[All black-&-white DC art courtesy of Jerry Bails, except where noted.]

DID YOU MISS ALTER EGO THE *FIRST* TIME AROUND? THE *CRIMSON CLAW* DIDN'T! CATCH ALTER EGO EACH WEEK BEFORE THE CLAW HAS A CHANCE TO PUT AN END TO HIM ONCE AND FOR ALL!!!

www.heroicpub.com/alterego

Alter Ego(tm) created by Roy Thomas/Ron Harris
Alter Ego ©1998 Roy Thomas

MONSTER!!
MR. MONSTER
IS BACK!
TWOMORROWS PUBLISHING and GILBERT STUDIOS present MR. MONSTER: HIS BOOKS OF FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE, VOLUME ZERO! This Trade Paperback collects all the hard-to-find MR. MONSTER stories from A-1, CRACK-A-BOOM! and DARK HORSE PRESENTS, plus over 30 PAGES OF ALL-NEW MR. MONSTER ART AND STORIES! Includes an ALL-NEW 8-PAGE FULL-COLOR INSERT featuring a terrifying Trencher/Mr. Monster slug-fest, drawn by KEITH GIFFEN AND MICHAEL T. GILBERT!
CREATURES BEWARE!
136-PAGE TRADE PAPERBACK WITH COLOR SECTION
$15.95 COVER PRICE • SHIPS JUNE 2001
TwoMorrows. Bringing New Life To Comics Fandom.

A (Rare) Interview with Steve Ditko

Conducted by Bob "Keith" Greene
Illustrations by Steve Ditko and Richard "Grass" Green

Introduction

Today it is understood that Steve Ditko does not give interviews. He has stated many times that his work speaks for itself. However, though it is not well known, Ditko did grant a handful of interviews to fan-editors in the 1960s. While these interviews are hardly extensive, never dwelled on personal matters or industry gossip, and were generally (like the one below) conducted by mail, they provide fascinating glimpses into the mind of this singular talent.

Bob "Keith" Greene's interview with Steve Ditko appeared in his own Rapport II *(1966), a high-quality ditto publication that, strangely enough, never had a* first *issue. But it did have one of the most forthcoming interviews ever given by the elusive Mr. D., which, as noted in the issue's editorial, was "a year in the making." It was clearly conducted while Ditko still worked for Marvel; he departed for Charlton and DC in late winter or spring of '66, as announced in the Bullpen Bulletins of Marvel issues cover-dated July 1966. The interview is reprinted here with Bob's (Keith's?) blessing, along with artwork by the talented early fan-artist "Grass" Green (no relation, even if Grass did spell his last name with an "e" for a while in those days).*

A further note: In the early 1960s only a handful of comics professionals paid much attention to the fledgling comics fandom movement. Fewer still actively contributed to the fanzines of the day. Steve Ditko, co-creator of Spider-Man and Dr. Strange, was one who did. Fans interpreted the Ditko pieces that turned up in Yancy Street Journal, The Comic Reader, *and* Alter Ego *(among others) as encouragement from this popular comics artist. One of the nicest of these illustrations is reprinted here from the pages of an obscure fanzine called* Komik Heroes of the Future *#6 (1964), published by Don Schank of Freehold, New Jersey.*

—Bill Schelly

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

STEVE DITKO—Born in Johnston, Pennsylvania. Enrolled in the Cartoonists and Illustrators School in New York in 1950. He had his first job drawing in 1953 with a very small comics publishing company, which then led to work at Headline Publications (*Black Magic*) during the short-lived 3-D era; Steve worked on Harvey's 3-D books, doing the inks, and he also did work on Simon and Kirby's *Captain 3-D*. He later began working as a regular at Charlton Press, doing fantasy books, and then finally drifted over to Marvel.

Bob "Keith" Greene: *Do you ever use models while you are working on a strip?*
Steve Ditko: No

Bob: *How much time do you spend completing a story?*
Steve: It varies The idea would be to just sit down and spend as much time on each panel or page as needed. But doing, say, just one 20-page story every four weeks means the writing and lettering have to be taken into account. I generally pencil five pages a day (I like four). The inking depends on how soon I get the story back after it's been lettered. I can wait a week or as long as three weeks. Dr. Strange or a sudden ink job is juggled in.

Bob: *What other artists, old or new, influence you the most?*
Steve: Jerry Robinson. [*His art instructor.—Ed.*]

Bob: *Up until recently, did you always ink your own work?*
Steve: Yes. I have to pencil the stories a lot differently than I naturally do when I do my own inking. For myself, I draw in line, or outline, sketchy in many areas, rarely putting in darks unless for a certain mood, and even then it's just a slight indication. I like drawing with the brush—not just covering pencil lines with ink. Penciling for others, all lines must be more definite, dark areas positive. Like a completed ink job but in pencil. That's what it should be... I've never managed to do it.

Bob: *What is your biggest ambition?*
Steve: The biggest was to get into comics.

Bob: *Have you ever considered selling a strip to a newspaper syndicate?*
Steve: Not seriously

Bob: *Is there any particular strip, other than those you are presently doing, that you would like working on?*
Steve: None, past or present. It's a lot more exciting working on something new, and you never have to worry about complaints in comparison to what it once looked like.

Bob: *What drove you to become an artist?*
Steve: I drove myself. I liked drawing—the kind of drawing done for comics. I never had any desire to be an illustrator or do a [*Saturday Evening*] *Post* cover.

Bob: *Which comic strips did/do you enjoy the most, from the Golden Era of comics to the present?*
Steve: I enjoyed a wide range of them in the so-called "Golden Era," too numerous to mention. What I enjoyed most (and I still do when I look at old comics) is the great variety. There were so many artists with all kinds of styles—every kind of feature imaginable. They weren't afraid to be different.

Bob: *Do you have a personal collection of comics?*
Steve: Yes, but because of a space problem, it's not large. I don't make an attempt to save everything—even of those whose work I like.

Bob: *Do you think that "Comic Fandom" has any considerable talent throughout that may be worth developing?*
Steve: It's not who I, or anyone else, thinks is "talented" and is worth developing. The question is—"What does the individual really want to do or become?" No goal is worthwhile to any individual unless that individual himself wants it and is willing to put the time and effort into reaching it.

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

Bob: *Do you feel that fanzines are a worthwhile effort?*
Steve: Anyone *who wants to do something* (providing it's legal) *and does it,* is doing a worthwhile effort! (He's a doer.) I've read a lot about the "crudzines," but the fact remains—these people *did put in the time and effort* and made a solid contribution to fandom

You have a lot of critics whose only contribution is hot air. The critics (who can only exist if something is already done by others) are always willing to tell the doers "how and what" do do, but are too rarely willing to put in the time and effort themselves. The bad and lousy in any undertaking will remain until replaced by someone who can do better. It's too bad so many direct their time, efforts, and energy to complaining about what is bad instead of building something better.

Bob: *Is there any advice that you can give to amateur artists that may help to improve their talents?*
Steve: You must really *understand* the basics of art—perspective, composition, anatomy, drapery, light and shade, story telling, etc. You need a solid foundation of what is right and good to build on. You can't really draw anything *well* unless you understand the purpose of that drawing (story telling), the best way to get the drawing across (individual point of view—composition), and convincingly (perspective, anatomy, drapery, light and shade).

Until I came under the influence of Jerry Robinson, I was self-taught, and you'd be amazed at the hours, months, and years one can spend practicing bad drawing habits. Jerry gave me a good foundation, but I have to constantly watch out; bad drawing habits are hard to kill. Practicing on a solid, proper foundation, you train your hand and mind to work like a unit, while correctly broadening your knowledge and ability. Spend more time practicing the things you find most difficult to do, not what is easy or you like. Keep eliminating the problems, study, draw life around you—people, drapery, and *reality.* Study other artists to see how they interpret reality to art. Study and compare your art to others and reality—not copying, either, but interpreting it the way *you* think best

No one is an original artist; no artist living today or yesterday invented or discovered art, brushes, ink, paper, or comics. Everyone builds on what was done before or is being done (whether it's a shoe, a light bulb, an airplane, or a drawing).

In art, the artists interprets in his own individual way; he plays up more of or less of; uses more or less of what others have built. He can stress constant over natural action. A comical approach or a serious one. A lot of fine lines or bold lines; detailed or plain. Use line-pattern textures or solid and straight black and white. Any mixture of all there is. His style or "originality" is just his individual interpretation.

If you draw a scene the way you personally think it should be, rather than what this or that artist did with a similar scene or might do, you will have your own "original" style. After all, there's really no one else in the world jut like you.

*[***Bill Schelly**, *our special scout for fan-archival goodies, is the author of* The Golden Age of Comic Fandom, *whose expanded version is being published even as we write these words. He has also edited two volumes of* Fandom's Finest Comics *and (with Roy Thomas) the Eisner-nominated trade paperback* Alter Ego The Best of the Legendary Comics Fanzine, *which reprints (with new commentary) the highlights of the original* A/E *fanzine from 1961-1978.]*

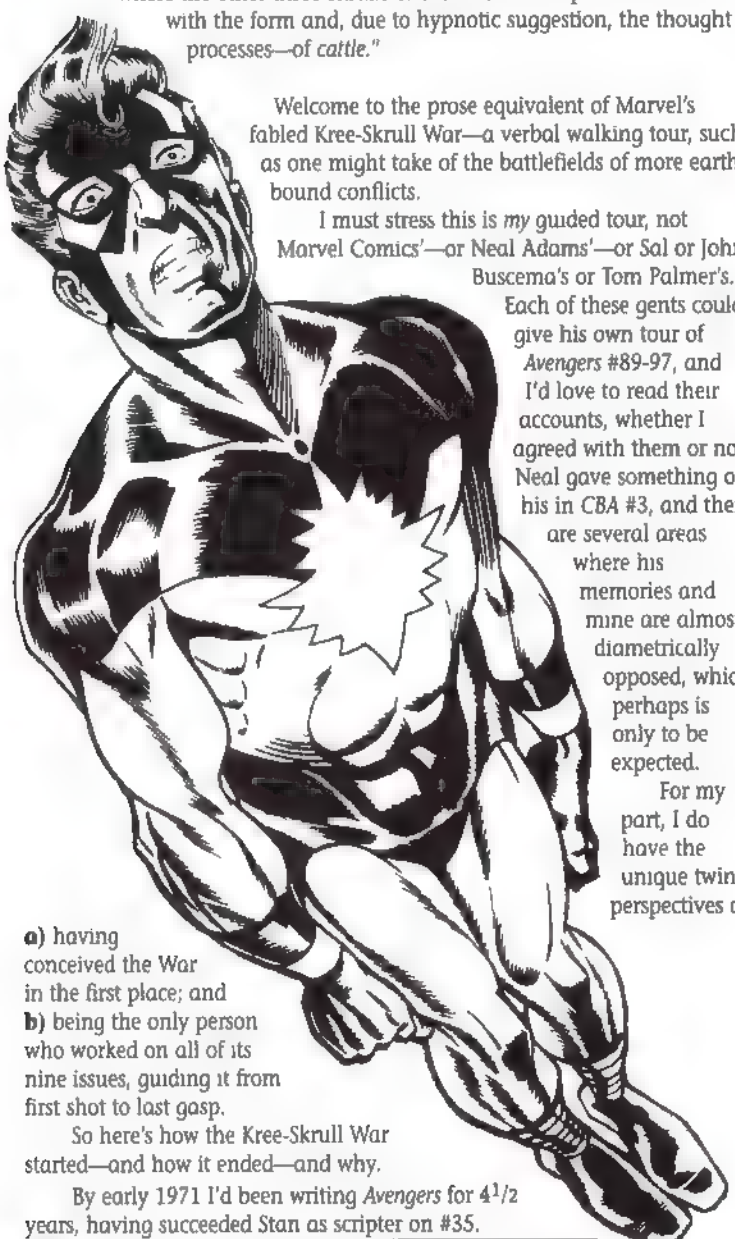
What Did You Do in the Intergalactic War, Daddy?

A WALKING TOUR OF THE KREE-SKRULL WAR

Conducted by Roy Thomas

"...And over to your left, you'll see Avengers Mansion, where the Vision and the Kree warrior Captain Marvel halted a falling helicopter—while this plaza is where the Mandroids attacked the Avengers by order of H. Warren Craddock, head of the Alien Activities Commission. Of course, we now know that 'Craddock' was actually one of several Skrulls which had earlier impersonated the Fantastic Four.

"Now, if you'll board the charter bus, we'll proceed to the upstate farm where the other three Skrulls of that task force spent a decade with the form and, due to hypnotic suggestion, the thought processes—of *cattle.*"



Welcome to the prose equivalent of Marvel's fabled Kree-Skrull War—a verbal walking tour, such as one might take of the battlefields of more earth-bound conflicts.

I must stress this is *my* guided tour, not Marvel Comics'—or Neal Adams'—or Sal or John Buscema's or Tom Palmer's. Each of these gents could give his own tour of *Avengers* #89-97, and I'd love to read their accounts, whether I agreed with them or not. Neal gave something of his in *CBA* #3, and there are several areas where his memories and mine are almost diametrically opposed, which perhaps is only to be expected.

For my part, I do have the unique twin perspectives of: **a)** having conceived the War in the first place; and **b)** being the only person who worked on all of its nine issues, guiding it from first shot to last gasp.

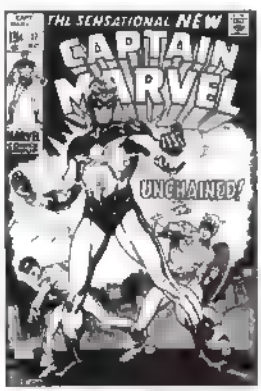
So here's how the Kree-Skrull War started—and how it ended—and why.

By early 1971 I'd been writing *Avengers* for 4 1/2 years, having succeeded Stan as scripter on #35.

Above: Detail from Gil Kane & Dan Adkin's masterful splash page to Captain Marvel *#17. ©1999 Marvel Entertainment.*

When the nice folks at Eclipse said on "my" trading-card in their 1992 *Famous Comic Book Creators* set that "Roy is, after Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, most responsible for the modern Marvel Universe," I knew that the primary justification for that sentence, if any (the point can of course be argued), was the Kree-Skrull War and a handful of other key Marvel events.

I was and *am* a continuity buff—and I'm proud, rather than ashamed, to admit it. As a kid in the '40s and '50s, I'd get annoyed when Superman fought Martians one month, and Batman fought an entirely different species of Martians the next! I knew from *All-Star* and *World's Finest* that DC's heroes lived in the same world, so why should they encounter different Martians? If a comics company didn't care about its own universe, how was I expected to take its stories seriously, once I got past the age of eight?



©1999 Marvel Entertainment.

I agree with Emerson's old chestnut, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds"; but I view my desire for a reasonably consistent continuity as anything *but* foolish. To my mind, it's the converse that's the folly. Screw the revisionists.

Because Stan at least co-wrote all its super-hero titles from 1961-65, Marvel had a far more internally consistent world than DC when I started work there in July 1965. He and Jack Kirby had introduced the Skrulls in *Fantastic Four* #2, the Kree Sentry and Ronan the Accuser in #64-65. Once *two* empire-ruling races were known to be roaming around out there in intergalactic space, I felt they must be aware of each other as either (a) allies; (b) rivals; or (c) wary watchers in an uneasy standoff. Which was it?

Since Stan hadn't woven together the Skrull and Kree strands of the Marvel tapestry by 1971, I decided to do it myself. By then, Stan rarely involved himself in the storylines of comics he didn't script, so all I needed to know was that he didn't object to my using the Skrulls and Kree, and didn't plan to use either in *F.F.*, *Spider-Man*, or *Thor* for the next few months. He didn't.

From the start, the focal points of the Kree-Skrull War were our Kree-born Captain Marvel and his young friend Rick Jones.

Mar-Vell had debuted in *Marvel Super-Heroes* #12 (Dec. 1967), just as Kree meddling in Earth's pre-history was being recounted in an Inhumans series in *Thor* by Stan and Jack. Stan wrote that first CM story, then dumped him in my lap for #13 and early issues of his own mag. Stan had been prodded into doing a hero named Captain Marvel by publisher Martin Goodman, mostly so no other company could do one and confuse the public between Marvel *Comics* and a *Captain* Marvel. (I can't tell you how often, in the '60s, I told someone I worked for Marvel Comics and had him pipe up, "Boy, I used to love Captain Marvel!")

By *CM* #17, with our hero trapped in the Negative Zone and a declining sales spiral, I'd persuaded Stan to let me return to the title and mutate Mar-Vell into a science-fiction answer to the original Big Red Cheese; I'd even designed a new costume for him, patterned after the short-lived Jerry Robinson *Atoman* of 1946. Happily, Gil Kane became *CM*'s artist just in time to help me revise the outfit still further, and to draw a story whose plot had already been mailed to Don Heck. I then shoehorned our costume and a few plot set-ups into Don and Archie Goodwin's #16.

I CANNOT HEAR YOU, GREAT RONAN--BUT I PRAY THAT YOU RECEIVE MY MESSAGE
AN EMERGENCY, FIFTH MAGNITUDE, HAS OCCURRED IN THE SHORT TIME SINCE YOU LEFT US
THE KREE GALAXY --IS AT WAR!
OUR SPACE-LANES HAVE ONCE MORE BEEN INVADED--OUR STELLAR FREIGHTERS DECIMATED--BY OUR INTER-NEBULAR RIVALS
THE ENTIRE KREE GALAXY IS UNDER ASSAULT FROM--THE SKRULLS!
THE SKRULLS! THEY ARE OUR AVOWED FOES--SINCE TIME OUT OF MIND.
NO LONGER CAN I TOY WITH THIS MISERABLE BLEMISH UPON THE MAP OF THE UNIVERSE.

Stardate of Infamy: The Krees have at it from Avengers *#91. Art by the underrated Sal Buscema. ©1999 Marvel Entertainment.*

CM #17 had Rick Jones ("sidekick to the stars"), who'd previously chummed around with Hulk and Captain America, don a pair of "Nega-Bands" which, when slammed together, caused him and Mar-Vell to exchange places for hours. He'd float in stasis in the Neg-Zone while the Captain fought some menace on Earth. Sales of Gil's and my five issues eventually proved good enough that, despite cancellation after #21, *CM* would be revived in 1972.

But in mid-'71 Mar-Vell had neither planet nor comic to call his own. Rick's career as a protest singer was causing Mar-Vell's stays in the Zone to grow longer and longer; this created tension between them, since whoever was in *our* dimension controlled the Nega-Bands.

Okay, boots, let's start walking—

THE AVENGERS #89 (June '71—"The Only Good Alien..."):

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

Figuring my "atoms-switching" bit had run its course, I had Rick talked into changing places so Mar-Vell could use Reed Richards' apparatus to retrieve the youth from the Negative Zone. I postulated that, when the F.F. went out of town, they asked the Avengers to keep an eye on their headquarters, and vice versa.

Only the Vision, Scarlet Witch, and Quicksilver responded when Mar-Vell broke into the Baxter Building. He opened the Neg-Zone gateway and freed Rick—but the monstrous Annihilus, long itching to invade our dimension, escaped, as well.

While the Avengers corralled Annihilus, Mar-Vell fled. But a device in FF-HQ revealed that in the Zone Mar-Vell had unknowingly picked up some kind of "Nega-power radiation poisoning" which might soon kill him—or even build up to a chain reaction that could obliterate the planet. (Okay, okay, so the science might be a bit shaky. In a comic book universe where radiation usually turns people into super-heroes instead of tapioca pudding, you're gonna fault me for *bad science*?)

Meanwhile, in the Kree Galaxy, the ambitious Ronan seized power from the Intelligence Supreme. (I've always preferred that inverted form of his name to "Supreme Intelligence," which to me just sounds like somebody who scored high on his SAT's.)

From afar, Ronan activated Kree Sentry #459, who'd been standing around immobile in the Florida space center ever since *CM* #1. The Sentry attacked the Miami hospital in which the Vision was draining off Mar-Vell's excess radiation. It had orders to "kill Captain Marvel—and all who stand beside him!" Meaning three Avengers, Rick Jones, and a doctor who undoubtedly wished he'd gone golfing that day.

THE AVENGERS #90 (July '71—"Judgment Day"):

After a battle royal with the Avengers (you expected maybe binding arbitration?), Sentry #459 escaped to Alaska with a captive Mar-Vell, where he and Ronan used "Evo-rays" to devolve the local flora and fauna into primitive life forms. There, Quicksilver, Wanda, Vision, Wasp, and Yellowjacket (Hank Pym's *fourth* masked persona—collect them all!) soon found themselves facing a mesmerized, hostile Goliath—actually Hawkeye, who'd taken over Pym's growing power because he wasn't using it.

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

Ronan told Mar-Vell his goal was nothing less than turning all Earth life "back along an evolutionary path to the state in which the Kree found them, eons ago." Ronan stated the first draft of the saga's theme, waxing eloquent about humankind: "A planet which can produce such a race—which can go from steam power to atomic power in less than a century—is a potential threat to Kree supremacy in space—a threat which cannot be allowed to grow and fester." The Evo-Rays would cease only when the last gleam of intelligence was erased from the last pair of "brutish, bestial eyes."

The "bestial eyes" in question turned out to belong to Hank Pym, devolved into a club-wielding ape-man stalking toward a fallen Wasp.

Tune in next month....

THE AVENGERS #91 (Aug. '71—"Take One Giant Step—Backward!")

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

Needless to say, just enough of Hank's humanity remained to prevent his killing Jan. (Whew! That was a close one!) The Kree citadel went on spewing Evo-Rays in an ever-widening arc over this "backwash planet," devolving three U.S. technicians into cavemen. Along the way I found a moment for a sexual-tension scene between Wanda and the Vision.

While the Avengers fought Ronan and the Sentry, Rick used Mar-Vell's wrist Uni-beams to shut down the Evo-rays. Just then, a transmission from space informed Ronan that their "inter-nebular rivals" had invaded their star-lanes: *"The entire Kree Galaxy is under assault from—the Skrulls!"*

Ronan teleported himself home, leaving the Sentry to take the fall. Arctic life forms returned to normal, and Hank announced he was resigning from the Avengers so he could stay in the lab "where I belong."

THE AVENGERS #92 (Sept. '71—"All Things Must End!")

Picking up where #91 left off, this issue contained no less than four, *maybe even five, Skrulls, though readers wouldn't know that for a while*—while the Kree continued to cast a long shadow via the expatriate Mar-Vell.

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

The Avengers' butler Jarvis brought in the morning paper, wherein the rescued technicians spilled their guts about a clash between the Avengers and the "mysterious race known only as 'The Kree.'" Moments later, on TV (hmm—still black-&-white, I notice—surely Tony Stark could've sprung for a color set by 1971!), we saw H. Warren Craddock, head of the new Alien Activities Commission, stating his determination to get to the bottom of claims that Captain Marvel was a Kree: "I have in my possession a list of 153 'model citizens' who are actually *alien spies*.'" A not-so-subtle clue that Craddock was a spiritual heir to Senator Joseph McCarthy, the

man who'd given anti-communism a bad name in the 1950s. What *wouldn't* be revealed for months was that this wasn't really Craddock, but a shape-changing Skrull. And not just *any* Skrull, but—well, more about that later.

Avengers #93, *pg. 1 pencils—see it far bigger in* CBA *#3. Avengers ™ & ©1999 Marvel Entertainment.*

(I named Craddock, for no discernible reason, after singer Billy "Crash" Craddock, who'd had a late-'50s hit called "Don't Destroy Me," on which he sounded more like Elvis than any impersonator before or since. He was nicknamed "Crash" because he'd played football in school. I wish I knew why I remember stuff like that, and not who first suggested "the international X-Men"!)

Enter Cape security head Carol Danvers, a supporting character from Mar-Vell's late lamented mag. A few issues down the road we'd learn *she* may actually have been a Skrull, too. Personally, I prefer to think this one was the *real* McCarol, but that's just a latter-day guess.

In its own quiet way, *Avengers* #92 is the issue that really launches the Kree-Skrull War—and it's even the one that foreshadows how it would end.

On Page 16, Rick, head throbbing, suddenly remembered a barrelful of old super-hero comics he'd found as a kid. Some of those heroes—Captain America, Sub-Mariner, and the original Human Torch, Timely's "Big Three" from the 1940s—actually existed in the Marvel Universe, but it had been established in *F.F.* #4 that there was a *Sub-Mariner* comic two decades earlier.

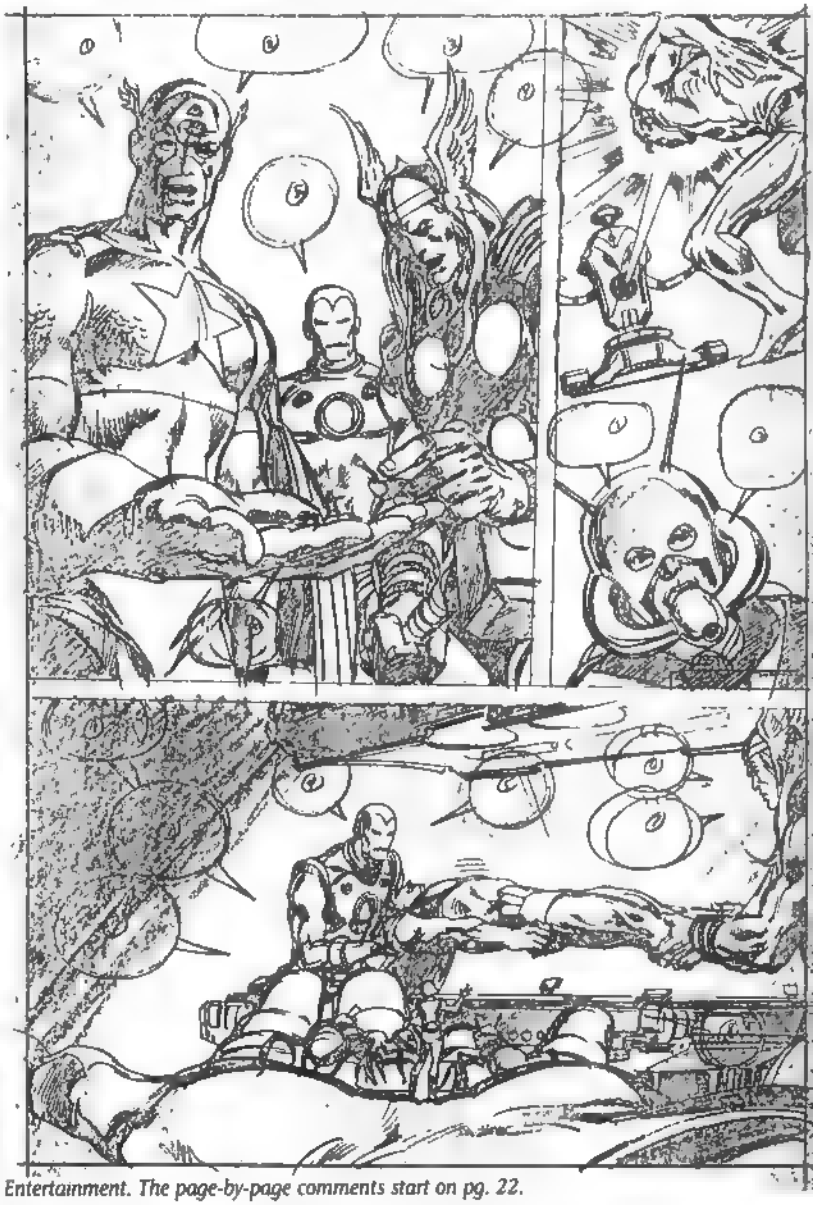
Though I had that panel colored in shades of blue, I'd sent Sal reference from which to draw the other unnamed 1940s heroes. *Cat-Man* (who had a girl sidekick called Kitten); the *Fighting Yank* (whom I'd later transmute into the Spirit of '76 in *The Invaders*); the *Heap* (forerunner of Herb Trimpe's and my Glob in *Hulk*, and the later Man-Thing and Swamp Thing), the *Green Lama* (who resembled DC's Spectre); and the *Fantom of the Fair* (whom in the '80s I would ungraciously turn evil in DC's *Secret Origins*) [see pg. 27].

Rick mused: "That's when I first decided I wanted to be a super-hero—or do anything I could to be around guys like that—guys who lived and fought in a world of black-&-white, not murky gray.... These days, you can't tell the good guys from the bad guys without a scorecard. And there *ain't* no scorecard." (What would he say about *today's* heroes?)

#92 also contained the hearings of the Alien Activities Commission, in which the Vision swore to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but: "My advanced circuitry is such that it is difficult, if not impossible, for me to do otherwise." (Shades of Mr. Spock, yes, but also of my childhood idol Johnny Weissmuller's swearing-in in "Tarzan's New York Adventure": "Tarzan *always* tell truth!")

The hearings adjourned, the Vision, Pietro, Wanda, and Goliath found the Mansion trashed by a mob enraged by rumors of "aliens among us" and by the Avengers' aid to Mar-Vell. And who showed up but Captain America, Thor, and Iron Man to declare that these four had "disgraced" the group, and to declare the Avengers "disbanded—for all time!"

I can't recall today whether I "knew" at the time that this Thor, Cap, and Iron Man were really three more morphed Skrulls. Instead of trying to



Avengers #93, *pp. 3 & 4 pencils. Avengers ™ & ©1999 Marvel Entertainment. The page-by-page comments start on pg. 22.*

conquer the Earth, maybe the Skrulls should have just *replaced* its population, like the pod-people in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

As they say on *The X-Files*, trust no one. Not even Chris Carter.

That's the point I'd reached when Neal Adams came along.

After working in tandem on *X-Men*, we were doing the Inhumans series in *Amazing Adventures* when he agreed to pencil *Avengers*. Neal says in *CBA* #3 that Stan asked him draw *Avengers* back in 1968, but I don't recall Stan ever mentioning that to me. Sal Buscema hopped to another monthly, and never lost a day's work. That was the way we did things then.

To signal his arrival, Neal volunteered to draw #92's cover. There could hardly have been a more dramatic depiction of Thor, Iron Man, and Cap ordering the lesser Avengers out of the Mansion, like the angel expelling Adam and Eve from the Garden.

Things were about to get wild....

THE AVENGERS #93 (Nov. '71—"This Beachhead Earth"):

This was the *big* one—in more ways than one!

CBA #2 detailed why Marvel's comics suddenly grew (in its Nov. 1971 issues) from 32 interior pages to 48—from 19 story pages to 34—from 15¢ to 25¢. It was a business decision made at the same time, by an astounding coincidence (yeah, right!), by National/DC.

Though it would tax me to write longer stories while helping Stan oversee a near-doubling of story pages, with attendant strains on all creative personnel, I loved the idea of bigger mags. When I'd started reading comics in the mid-40s, many had still been 48-pagers (52-pagers, counting the covers—and why shouldn't they?).

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

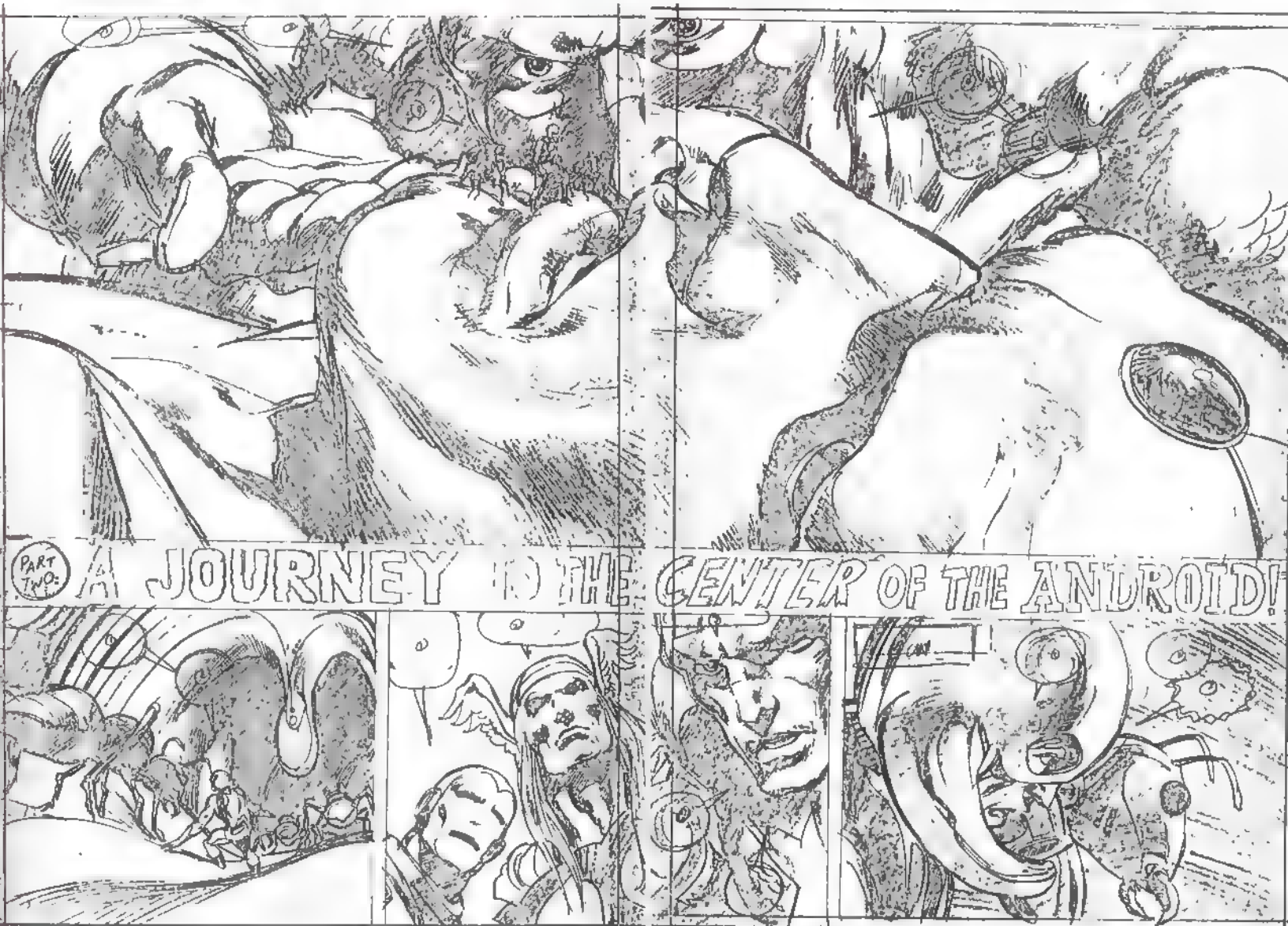
We were fortunate to persuade Tom Palmer, who'd inked our *X-Men* run (but not "The Inhumans"), to sign on as inker. Tom is the great unsung hero of the Kree-Skrull War, often coming through by inking pages virtually overnight—and not a single page looks rushed! If he isn't mentioned often in this article, it's only because his work was so flawless that we came to take it—unforgivably—for granted.

Now it was time to reveal that Earth was caught in the middle of a war 'twixt Kree and Skrull—much like some backward Pacific island during World War Two, whose Stone Age inhabitants could barely conceive of the scale of the conflict going on in the outside world.

My main inspiration for this theme was Raymond F. Jones' 1952 novel *This Island Earth*, which I had devoured as a teenage member of the Science Fiction Book Club. I never cared for the late-'50s movie made from it, but I loved the book's slow revelation of a cosmos-spanning war going on beyond earthmen's ken, a war which might burst upon them in full fury at any moment.

At this point, Neal's and my memories definitely diverge on a few key points. Though I in no way doubt his sincerity, some of what he said in *CBA* #3 is at considerable variance with my own often vivid memories.

E.g., I definitely recall the "three Skrull cows" as *my* addition to the story, whatever wonderful things Neal did with them. I even recall when and where I told him about it, and have said so in several previous interviews, but I won't go into that here. After all, I'd been a Marvel reader from



Avengers #93, pp. 5 & 6 pencils Avengers ™ & ©1999 Marvel Entertainment.

Avengers #93, pp. 7 & 8 pencils. Avengers ™ & ©1999 Marvel Entertainment.

Fantastic Four #1, and had re-read all those early issues many times, first as a fan and then in my editorial capacity.

I'd noticed that, at the end of *F.F.* #2, the heroes went after "a quartet of aliens" that had impersonated them, and captured three Skrulls. Reed said "the fourth one" was on his way home with the invasion fleet. But I'd gradually come to wonder if maybe Jack Kirby had simply drawn three Skrulls instead of four in that fight sequence, and Stan had covered the omission in dialogue. I'd seen that kind of thing happen since I'd come to work for Marvel. Besides, how did *Reed* know where the fourth Skrull really was?

At any rate, in a brilliant denouement, Reed hypnotized the Skrulls and ordered them to morph into *cattle*. The now-quadruped trio were left contentedly grazing in a pasture.

That meant that, if I wanted him to be, a *fourth* Skrull was still on Earth, mayhap hiding out in a human identity. I recall intending mutant-baiter H. Warren Craddock to be that "fourth Skrull" as far back as #92, the Sal Buscema-drawn issue in which he was introduced.

To readers, of course, it made no difference whether Neal or I or letterer Sam Rosen came up with the above notion. But since in #3 Neal recounted his recollections, I felt I must add my own. There is, obviously, no way of fully reconciling the two, and I won't attempt to.

Onward: As was our wont, Neal and I had one of our usual "non-discussion discussions" about the plot, which nobody who wasn't present with a tape-recorder will ever be able to reconstruct, and Neal went off to draw his *Avengers* debut.

Then began the nail-biting days of waiting, since Neal was in such demand from various sources that sometimes particular assignments seemed to get temporarily lost in the shuffle (at DC as well as at Marvel, I never felt singled out). I figured it'd be worth any problems, as long as we made the issues' shipping dates.

Either that first day or a few days later, Neal told me an idea he wanted to toss into #93. When the Vision collapsed at the start of the story, he'd like to bring back Ant-Man and have him go inside the Vision to take a look around. Hank had quit the Avengers only two issues before, but I had a soft spot for him, nutty as it'd been to see him ride off into the sunset on the back of an insect at the end of the Lee-Kirby stories. Neal's idea had nothing whatever to do with the war, but it sounded like fun, and 34 pages *was* a lot of space to fill. I told him to go for it.

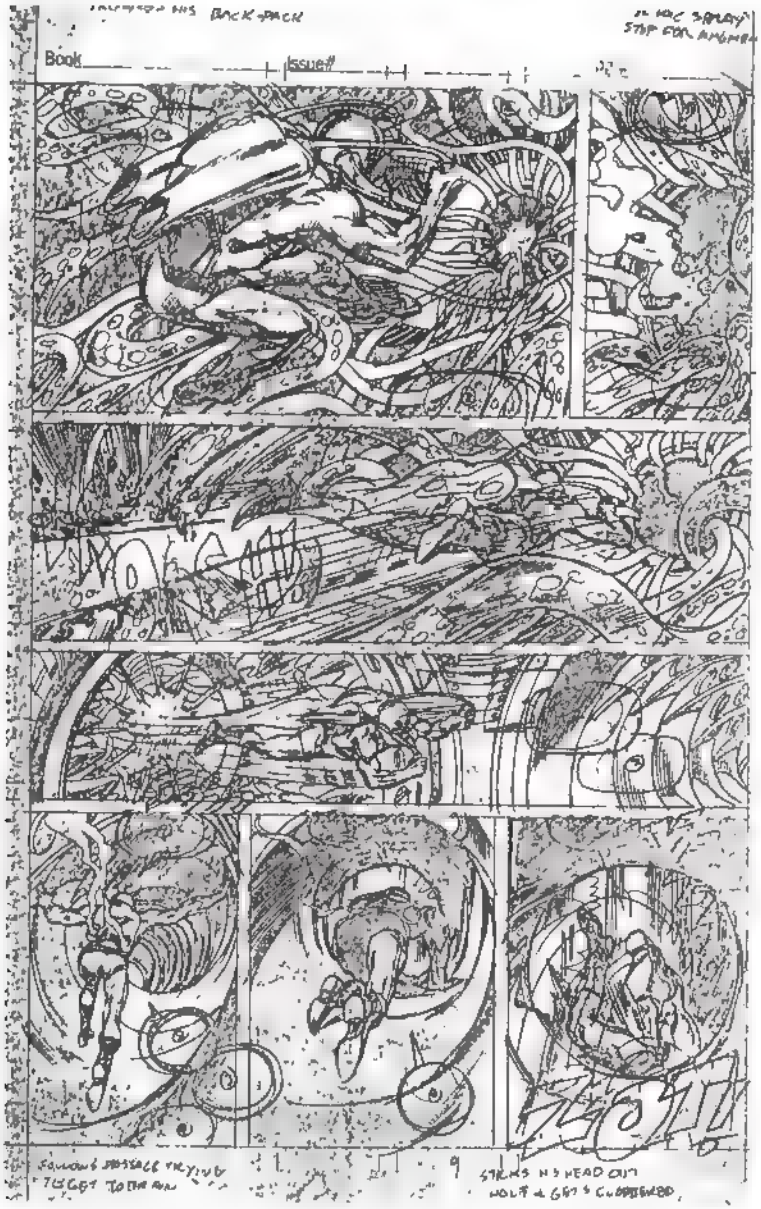
As good fortune would have it, comics archivist David (Hambone) Hamilton preserved copies of the *pencils* of twelve of the first 17 pages of *Avengers* #93, complete with Neal's "border notes" and a few scribbled comments by yours truly. (It must be noted that, though border notes by Neal, Jack Kirby, or whoever often represent new thoughts by the artist, in other cases they may only repeat things the writer and artist previously discussed. The first person to write something down isn't automatically the one who first thought of them.)

So let's have a closer look at those fabulous penciled pages.

Page 1: A splash page of real impact. That rolling "THOOOM" was penciled by Neal. Stan preferred to indicate sound effects himself, so Marvel artists had gotten out of the habit of doing them, but Neal had a feeling for where and how this one should go, and seeing the page, I heartily agreed.

In captions I played that "THOOOM" up as sounding the death-knell of an era. After all, in story and in art and even in the new increased page count, this issue heralded a new age for *The Avengers*, as well.

Neal's border notes suggested as a title, "Three Cows Shot Me Down!" It



Avengers #93, pg 9 pencils Avengers ™ & ©1999 Marvel Entertainment.

surprised me to read in *CBA* #3 that he ever seriously thought I might use that title—or that Stan wouldn't have tossed me out a window if I had. In honor of the Jones novel I called the story "This Beachhead Earth." This title instituted a pattern I followed through #97 of doing riffs on the names of famous works of science-fiction. (My esteemed colleague Barry Windsor-Smith went on record in *CBA* #2 as hating that approach to naming stories. I'm equally happy to avow that I love it, when it fits. Different strokes....)

I penciled title and credits directly on the original artwork, as Stan liked it done, indicating the perspective I wanted. And Sam Rosen rendered it all beautifully, as usual. (Because we reproduced the Pg. 1 pencils in CBA #3, we've printed it a bit smaller on pg. 20.)

Page 2: Neal's irreverent suggestion at page bottom for Thor's dialogue was hardly meant to be taken seriously. (Page 3 is missing here, as are other later ones, but you can't have everything)

Page 4: Most artists draw Ant-Man and his ants larger than they would realistically be, in order to squeeze them and a normal-size human into the same panel. Neal's more naturalistic approach kept Pym closer to the size of a true ant. In many ways, Neal was the ideal Ant-Man artist, even if he only drew the character that one time

Page 5-6: Again that sense of scale in this two-page spread, as Ant-Man pauses on the android's lip, ready to lead his insect allies inside. Neal's concept may have been owed something to the movie *Fantastic Voyage*, and to the stories and films it had borrowed from; but he was never content merely to imitate what had been done before

Since this lengthy issue was broken into several chapters, he left me a big open space for a title. I came up with the Jules Verne-derived "A Journey to the Center of the Android."

And awaaaay we gooooo...!

Page 7: Some of Neal's notes outlining his thinking about the Vision's innards got trimmed by the photocopier 27+ years ago. They say: "filiments [sic] are pulling them to hole where periodic spray of acid [does something to?] foreign bodies"... "Tho small, Ant-Man retains his full strength. He can break these *strong organic regenerative* filiments [sic]."

I chose not to work most of that into dialogue, feeling Neal's pictures spoke for themselves; I had other things I wanted to say. But now, at last, you know exactly what was happening in those panels.

Page 8: On a whim, I named Pym's three ants Crosby, Stills, and Nash, and I tried to make their deaths have an impact. Ant-Man compared their screams to those of "lost souls in torment—or the wailing of a forsaken child"—a sound he didn't ever want to hear again.

I had recently read an article on experiments which indicated that ants did indeed "scream," if you had the apparatus to hear them, and that the sound disturbingly resembled that of a human infant. To a guy who chummed around with ants, I felt such a cry might be extremely discomfiting.

Neal inspired part of my attitude, since he has a caring Ant-Man toss the surviving ants "to safety" and his notes say Pym "tells them to leave body, he will continue on alone. (He can't watch out for them.)" Neal and I were on the same wave length, and that's all that mattered to me.

Page 9: A beautiful action page The notes say he "follows passage trying to get to brain" and then "sticks his head out [of] hole & gets clobbered."

Page 10: I found the powerful main panel more reminiscent of *Metropolis* than *Fantastic Voyage*, so I wrote in a nod to that 1927 film classic. Gerard Jones and Will Jacobs, in their *The Comic Book Heroes*, feel I was just "tossing out pop-culture references" willy-nilly, but to me they're 'way off the mark. Those scenes reminded *me* of *Metropolis*, so why not Henry Pym?

Admittedly, I was stretching a bit to suddenly make Pym "an old E.C. Fan-Addict," referring to EC Comics' 1950s fan club, of which I'd been a member, even though I never bought EC's horror titles. Many readers got a kick out of the reference, since few super-heroes (Barry Allen excepted) had ever admitted to being comics fans as kids, and probably none had ever said they were *horror-comics* fans. If I'd written other Ant-Man stories after this, I'd have done more with that side of Doc Pym. No one else ever picked up on it. (Maybe he and Rick Jones would have eventually got together and traded comics!)

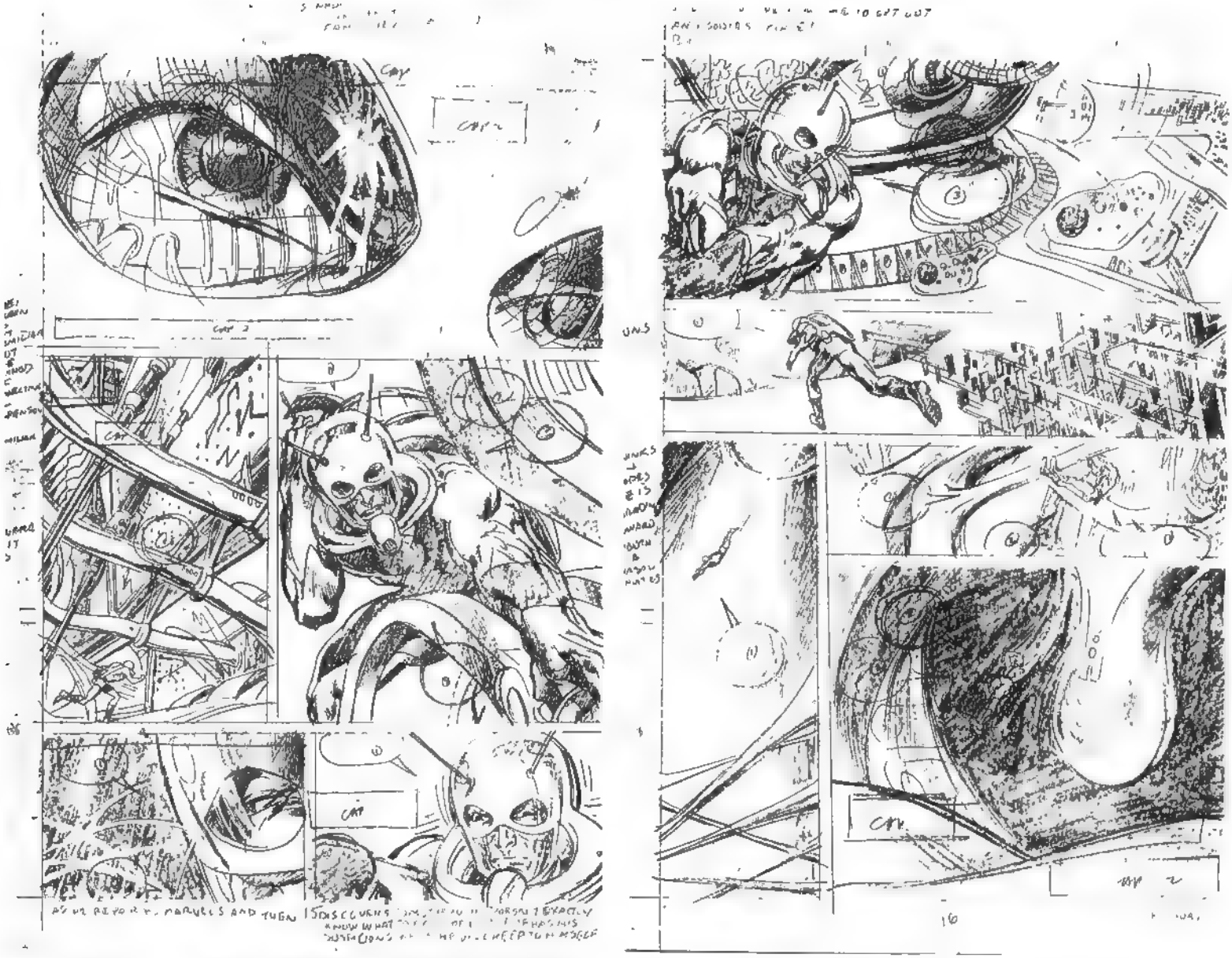
Avengers #93, pg. 10 pencils, which you can find larger in CBA #3. Avengers ™ & ©1999 Marvel Entertainment.

Incidentally, on Page 13, for which we have no pencil photocopies, I solidified Ant-Man's EC connection by having him spout: "Frankly, my dear, I don't *give* a hydroelectric dam!"—followed by: "I think *Clark Gable* said that—or was it *Al Feldstein*?" The former line was from a parody of "Gone with the Wind" in the eighth issue of *Panic*, EC's answer to its own color *Mad* comics, edited (if not written) by Al Feldstein, who had gone on to raise *Mad* to the sales pinnacles it achieved from the late '50s on.

A bit of self-indulgence on my part? Probably. A little esoteric? Undoubtedly. But still consistent with the newly-discovered comics-loving side of Hank's personality. To paraphrase Woody Allen re his films, I've never felt every reader has to understand every line of every comic. Me, I'm still trying to track down a few references in *Annie Hall*.

As for the Vision: When I'd conceived him in 1968, I hadn't envisioned him as having robotic insides; I'd seen him as more organic, with synthetic flesh and blood and bone. But I'd given Neal something resembling *carte blanche* on this sequence, and didn't want to quibble.

Page 15: Neal wrote in the left margin: "This brain is not familiar, but the method of [connecting?] & suspension *is* familiar." I don't know if I was



Avengers #93, pp. 15 & 16 pencils. Avengers ™ & ©1999 Marvel Entertainment.

ever quite certain what that meant.

A note at the bottom of the page would cast a long shadow: "Discovers something He doesn't know exactly what to make of it but he has suspicions which he will keep to himself."

Neal said he wanted Ant-Man to have recognized somehow that the Vision's body had once been the original (android) Human Torch of 1939. Intrigued by the notion, I wrote a caption about "a mystery within an enigma... one of which our readers *may* learn one day." We'd see.

Later, Steve Englehart, who wrote *Avengers* after I became editor-in-chief, got my okay to follow through on Neal's concept. Years later, Steve's take was undone by others who couldn't leave well enough alone. But hey—what did Neal Adams, Roy Thomas, and Steve Englehart know about doing comics, anyway?

Page 16: More of the Vision's mechanistic insides—here juxtaposed with the very organic feel of that hanging uvula. Well, why the hell not?

Page 17: Neal's note at bottom was typical of him in our collaborations: "Viz says something enigmatic." Neal liked to leave me such challenges from time to time. I'm happy he usually felt I rose to the occasion, just as his art nearly always came up to *my* expectations, and often wildly exceeded them.

Alas, that's all we have of Neal's uninked pencils from *Avengers* #93. But it's a glass any sane reader must consider far more than half full—a fascinating glimpse into one of the most important issues, and one of the most creative sequences, of the Silver Age of Comics.

And the issue was barely half over!

Vision, Quicksilver, Goliath, and Scarlet Witch had their encounter with the "three Skrull cows"—and they sure do look like cows here, not bulls, even if no udders are in evidence. Neal would have drawn the udders so realistically that the Comics Code would probably have made us excise them, anyway.

(An aside: I'm told writer/artist John Byrne did a story, later, which revealed that those three Skrulls had indeed been turned into *cows*—and that a nearby town suffered strange effects from drinking their milk. I'm far from the biggest fan of many of John Byrne's retroactive takes on earlier comics, but this one definitely works for me.)

I used another SF-inspired title on chapter three: "War of the Weirds!" This was getting to be fun!

Considerably less enjoyable was what I had to do on Pp. 28-32, where Neal had left space for a countdown between rows of panels. I took those pages with me to Missouri during a vacation and spent hours at my parents' kitchen table, pasting up computer-style letters. I wasn't taking any chances they'd get left off later, as a tight deadline loomed.

While Avengers fought Skrulls, Mar-Vell utilized the Skrulls' apparatus to construct an Omni-Wave Projector, the Kree's device for communicating instantaneously across hyper-space. As the Skrulls knew, it could be also converted into "the most dangerous weapon in the cosmos!"

(Another aside: When, for the multi-part 1992 *Galactic Storm*, editor Mark Gruenwald sent me an overall outline which mentioned the Omni-Wave Projector, I said I thought that was a dumb name. He reminded me I was the one who'd coined it; I had totally forgotten. But I still thought it was a lousy name.)

Mar-Vell jerry-rigged an OWP—then destroyed it, when he realized the "Carol Danvers" beside him was actually a Skrull—in fact, *Super*-Skrull. How did he know? Why, she had called him "Mar-Vell," a name known on Earth at this time only to the Avengers.

Clever, these Kree.

Avengers #93, pg. 17 pencils. Avengers ™ & ©1999 Marvel Entertainment

The next-issue blurb "20,000,000 Years to Earth!" emanated from Ray Harryhausen's *Five Million Years to Earth*, one of the better Kong-inspired movies of the 1950s.

I was in heaven. Despite outstanding art from Sal and others, I'd missed John Buscema ever since he'd left *Avengers*, and Neal's art made me dare to hope that the remainder of this storyline was going to be the space-war opus to end all space-war opuses that I wanted it to be. Obviously, he felt the same way.

THE AVENGERS #94 (Dec. '71—"More Than Inhuman").

I've no precise memory of how long it took to produce *Avengers* #93, but I'd bet my bound *All-Stars* it was more than four weeks. After all, Neal and I were producing nearly twice as many pages per issue as we had on *X-Men*!

From the outset, looking at the deadline schedule (and how could I avoid it, when production manager John Verpoorten kept shoving it under my nose!), I knew that, even if Neal and I got the 34-page #93 done in time, we'd be in trouble when the 34-page *#94* came due. It's my recollection that Neal agreed that, from here on, he'd handle 20 or so pages per month and I'd find another artist to do a backup story featuring an Avenger or two not in the main story.

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

And that's how Alex Toth came to almost draw a story in *Avengers* #94.

Toth, like Neal, is one of the great talents the comics field has produced. His last brush with Marvel had been in *X-Men* #12, in 1965. (And the thought of Toth penciling over Kirby layouts which were then inked by Vince Colletta still boggles the mind a third of a century later, for 'way too many reasons to go into here!)

As I pondered how to handle #94, Stan told me that Toth, whom I'd admired ever since his Green Lantern art in the '40s, wanted to draw something for Marvel. Stan said Toth wanted to be an integral part of the process, not just the artist. (I forget Stan's exact words, relayed from Toth, who lived then as now in the L.A. area; but that was very much the sense of them.)

I'd been kicking around an idea for a Black Panther tale dealing with apartheid in a nation I called Rudyarda, after Kipling, an obvious stand-in for South Africa. I wrote a page or two of what I called "Notes toward a Plot," laying out a general plotline and suggestions of various directions we might take the story. I invited Toth to contribute his own ideas, and sent my "Notes" off to California.

Nothing prepared me for what I received by return mail... Toth fired back the Notes, along with a lengthy hand-lettered missive. I remember vividly one particular sentence, writ large and underscored:

"IS THIS YOUR CORPORATE IDEA OF A PLOT?"

I was taken aback, since actually the correct answer was "No." (Hadn't I explained that they were merely "Notes *toward* a Plot"?) Toth forcefully berated the "plot's" flimsy structure and loose ends.

But I was determined to work with him if I could, so I sent a second letter, saying I'd been told he wanted to be a part of the plotting process; hence the work-in-progress I'd sent him. I wrote that, if he preferred, I'd be happy to send him a full synopsis—*if* he'd guarantee he would then follow it faithfully. Love Toth's work though I did, I wasn't going to let him have it both ways. I mailed the letter.

And got no response.

Well, not for half a decade, anyway.

Circa 1976, at a founding meeting of CAPS (Comic Art Professionals Society) after I'd moved to L.A , I spotted a big bear of a man, and was informed he was Alex Toth. Determined to meet this giant whose work I'd admired since 1947, I introduced myself by name as a writer/editor for Marvel.

He smiled tightly. "Oh yes," he said, "we had that little disagreement a few years ago."

THOUGHT WE HAD 'EM SPOOKED, FOR A SECOND THERE
MAYBE WE STILL DO, CLINT
AY, IF WE BUT BEST YON SPEEDING CRAFT. THE REST MAY FLEE
SAY NO MORE
LET'S GO, PEOPLE
I WOULD PREFER TO PRESS ON TO RESCUE WANDA -AND THE OTHERS
YET, LOGIC TELLS ME THAT THIS IS THE WAY. THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE
5

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

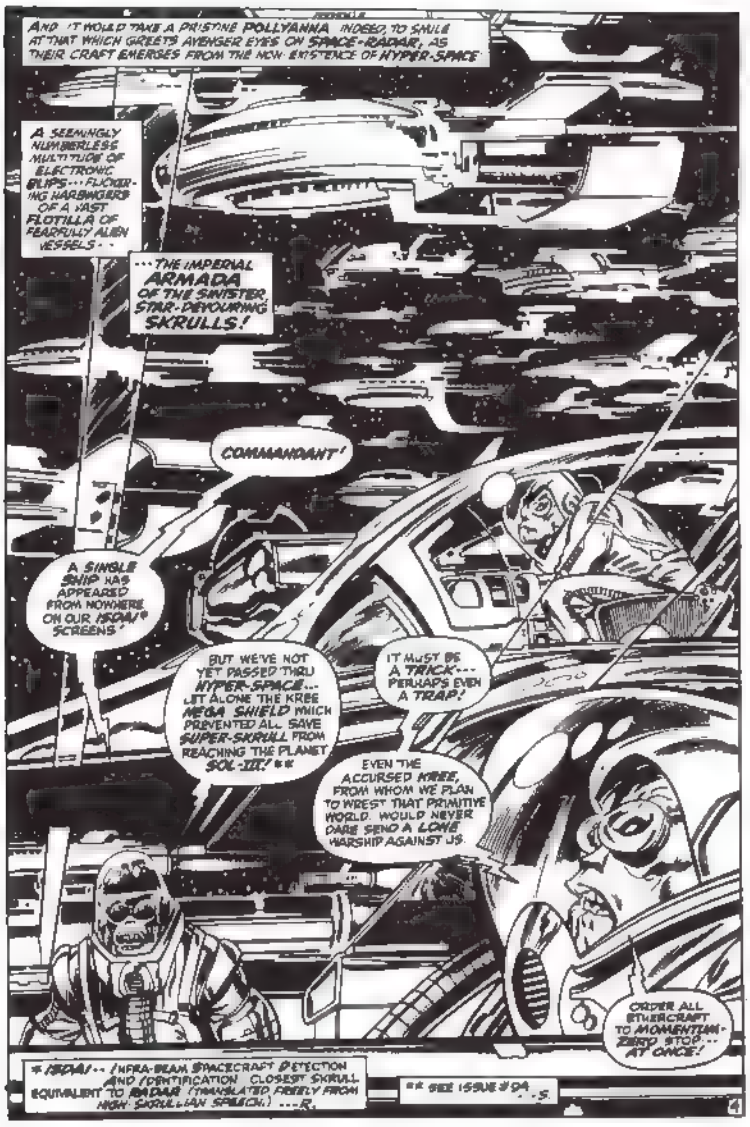
I smiled, mumbled something about how that was all water under the bridge, and we chatted meaninglessly for a few moments But I realized that Alex Toth has a long memory. I didn't mind. Maybe we have that in common, just a bit.

Even after so many years, I still regret Alex Toth and I never worked together, just once. Well, neither of us is dead yet. But neither of us is going to hold his breath waiting, either

Before my Panther concept could be revamped for a new artist, publisher Goodman abruptly dropped Marvel's comics back to 32-pagers, with 21 or so story pages, selling for 20¢. This turned out to be a brilliant business move, though many of us mourned those big 25-centers. My now-superfluous Panther idea would become the basis of my first *Fantastic Four* issue a year later.

In "More Than Inhuman," named as an homage to Theodore Sturgeon's classic *More Than Human*, Neal and I brought the Inhumans into the saga. They had been bio-engineered by the Kree in eons past, so it made sense the Kree would try to enlist them against the Skrulls.

Because Neal was doing *Avengers*, the Inhumans in *Amazing Adventures*, some DC art, and commercial work, it's my recollection (though evidently not Neal's) that somewhere along the line he and I agreed I'd have John


AND IT WOULD TAKE A PRISTINE POLLYANNA INDEED, TO SMILE AT THAT WHICH GREETS AVENGER EYES ON SPACE-RADAR, AS THEIR CRAFT EMERGES FROM THE NON-EXISTENCE OF HYPER-SPACE
A SEEMINGLY NUMBERLESS MULTITUDE OF ELECTRONIC BLIPS... FLICKERING HARBINGERS OF A VAST FLOTILLA OF FEARFULLY ALIEN VESSELS...
...THE IMPERIAL ARMADA OF THE SINISTER, STAR-DEVOURING SKRULLS!
COMMANDANT!
A SINGLE SHIP HAS APPEARED FROM NOWHERE ON OUR *RDM/* SCREENS!
BUT WE'VE NOT YET PASSED THRU HYPER-SPACE... LET ALONE THE KREE MEGA SHIELD WHICH PREVENTED ALL SAVE SUPER-SKRULL FROM REACHING THE PLANET SOL-III!" **
IT MUST BE A TRICK--- PERHAPS EVEN A TRAP!
EVEN THE ACCURSED KREE, FROM WHOM WE PLAN TO WREST THAT PRIMITIVE WORLD WOULD NEVER DARE SEND A LONE WARSHIP AGAINST US.
ORDER ALL ETHERCRAFT TO MOMENTUM-ZERO STOP... AT ONCE!
* *RDM!*... INFRA-BEAM SPACECRAFT DETECTION AND IDENTIFICATION CLOSEST SKRULL EQUIVALENT TO RADAR (TRANSLATED FREELY FROM HIGH SKRULLIAN SPEECH.) ...R.
** SEE ISSUE #94 ...S
4

Spectacular page from Avengers *#96. ©1999 Marvel Entertainment*

Buscema pencil the middle third of #94 ("1971: A Space Odyssey") to gain some time for #95. In it, to save Wanda and Pietro, CM agreed to reconstruct the Omni-Wave for the Skrull emperor.

Neal feels he wasn't informed of the Buscema chapter in advance, and (again) I have no reason to doubt his sincerity. Maybe I *was* hedging my bets; or perhaps Neal has forgotten a brief conversation. We'll never know. Anyway, I happily agreed not to ring in chapters by other artists again, if Neal would deliver the work in timely fashion.

Neal penciled the third chapter, "Behold the Mandroids," named for Michael Moorcock's controversial Nebula-winning novella *Behold the Man* (which I'd later have Doug Moench and Alex Niño adapt in *Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction*, and for which we'd receive hate mail).

I loved Neal's design for G-men in exo-skeletal armor, and christened them with a name I'd coined for a one-shot menace in *Captain Marvel* #18, "Mandroids." I've seen that word used a lot since, in movies as well as in Marvel Comics, but I'd never seen it used before. If anybody can trace the term "Mandroid" back further than *C.M.* #18, I'd be grateful for the info.

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

THE AVENGERS #95 (Jan. '72—"Something Inhuman This Way Comes.")

Well, okay, *Something Wicked This Way Comes* is fantasy, not science-fiction, but hey, the book's by Ray Bradbury, and that's close enough for me.

Neal and I had also been doing the Inhumans in the bi-monthly, two-feature *Amazing Adventures*. I'd figured it would be easier to get ten pages out of Neal every two months than 20-plus pages every month, and I wanted him to keep a presence in Marvel comics.

However, it turned out that at Marvel a bi-monthly feature was a drag both saleswise and creatively. *A.A.* wasn't seen by the fans as being "important" (or else it'd be a monthly, with just *one* feature, right?). This attitude was catching. Being busy, Neal and I both tended not to give the Inhumans as much attention as they needed. After #5-6 I had Gerry Conway dialogue #7; and after Neal and I reunited for #8, we turned the feature over to Gerry and Mike Sekowsky. More to the point here: *A.A.* #9-10 (the final, all-Inhumans issues) segued neatly into *Avengers* #95.

If Neal says it was his idea to toss into *Avengers* #95 a flashback sequence which showed Black Bolt responsible not only for his parents' death, but for the madness of his brother Maximus, I won't gainsay him. This backstory gave added resonance to the storyline, even if I was luke-warm about Neal's giving Maximus a new outfit. But hey, everybody changes his clothes now and then.

THE AVENGERS #96 (Feb. '72—"The Andromeda Swarm"):

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

I don't suppose Michael Critchton's *The Andromeda Strain* is exactly a science-fiction classic, but how could I resist naming a chapter of the War after the galaxy in which the Skrulls originated?

My hunch is that Neal tossed in that S.H.I.E.L.D. space station run by Nick Fury on Pp. 1-2, rather than having the Avengers head non-stop for the Andromeda Galaxy. The basic story is the same with or without it, but I wasn't about to discourage Neal from drawing panoramic space scenes, either there or on Page 4, where an Imperial Skrull Armada composed of myriad ships, no two alike, headed for our planet.

Y'know, it's funny, but I've just noticed again what I've observed more than once in going over the 150+ pages of the Kree-Skrull War: The thing I'm writing about least is the battles, like the one here with the Skrull fleet. Though Neal excelled in action, his fight scenes were less unique than other aspects of his art. It's not that anyone else then in comics (except maybe Kirby) did intergalactic or earthbound battles better than Neal; but there isn't much one needs to *say* about them. They were necessary. They looked great. They got the job done.

I think it was Neal who decided the Vision should go berserk and nearly pummel a Skrull to death, and that he suggested that as the cover scene to show that, with Wanda captive on the Skrull throneworld, Vizh was increasingly displaying human emotions like love—fear for loved ones—even rage. (This built on the growing romantic tension between the Vision and the Scarlet Witch shown back in #91.)

It was at this point that we brought Rick Jones back to prominence, as I'd always intended, hauled before Ronan on the Kree homeworld. Ronan elaborated that Earth was strategically important to both Skrull and Kree because it lay "almost midway" between their respective galaxies—a nod to the Battle of Midway, a tiny island halfway between Hawaii and Japan, the turning point in World War Two in the Pacific, and a nod as well to *This Island Earth*.

His tirade over, Ronan tossed Rick into a locked chamber with the Intelligence Supreme. Rick was unimpressed with the huge, green, multi-tentacled face on a giant TV screen. "You claim you're so freakin' smart—so how come Ronan's top dog, and you're locked up in this broom closet?"

The I.S. replied he had indeed underestimated Ronan, but that since then he had sent his mental waves across space to Earth, and that thereby he had indirectly led the Avengers and Mar-Vell to be hounded by H. Warren Craddock, caused Rick's disturbing dreams (including the one about super-heroes), and moved a Kree warrior of minor rank to abduct Rick.

Not bad for a deposed ruler under house arrest!

The I.S. then created a space-warp through which Rick was drawn back into the Negative Zone, right under the nose of Annihulus, still hanging around sulking from #89.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the final, 2/3-page panel in #96 never made it out of the Marvel offices. As I pored over Neal's exquisite pencils of Rick floating in the Neg-Zone, something nagged at the back of my mind. Something was wrong, but I couldn't figure out what it was. And then I saw it:

Rick Jones' outstretched left hand had *six fingers!*

I had Tom Palmer remove the extra digit when inking the page, and I don't recall if I ever even mentioned it to Neal. But I've always been curious—did he just make an uncharacteristic slip of the drawing pencil, or did he do that just to see if I'd spot it? I suspect the former, but with a talented gadfly like Neal, you just never knew.

And now it was time for the final battle—!

THE AVENGERS #97 (March '72—"Godhood's End"):

With a tip of the hat to the redoubtable Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End*—even though Clarke did yell at his literary agent a couple of years later when that worthy even *dared* suggest that he allow us to adapt one of his stories in *Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction*.

For years I've had to fend off uncomprehending fans who don't understand how I, or Marvel, or anyone in the Multiverse, could have let anyone but Neal Adams pencil the final, climactic chapter of the Kree-Skrull War.

Such people don't understand how the world works.

I don't relish re-hashing this matter, but it's impossible to understand one of the most salient and asked-about facts concerning the Kree-Skrull War—namely, why its final installment was penciled not by Neal Adams but by John Buscema—without touching on deadlines and publishing commitments. To do otherwise is to beg the question, or indeed to cross over into a Never-Never-Land.

Every 30 days Marvel had to deliver something called *The Avengers* to the printer, even if it was a reprint; we couldn't skip a month. If a book shipped even a week late, we were charged an arm and a leg—in an era when an arm *or* a leg was about all the profit we could expect to make on any individual issue.

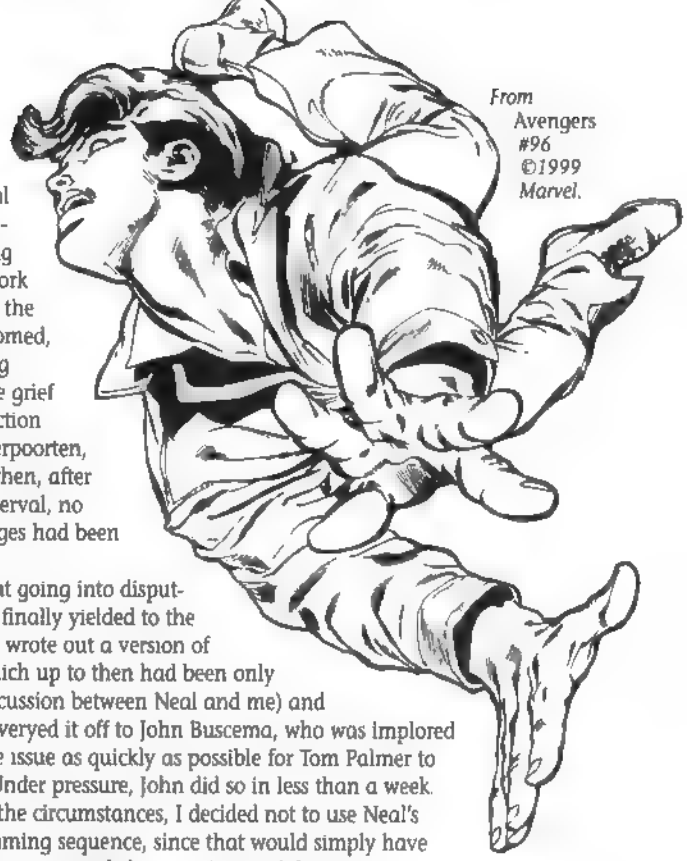
Rick thinking about Golden Age heroes. From Avengers *#92. ©1999 Marvel Entertainment.*

Thus, with Neal over-committed by his own admission, we were usually barely ahead of the printer. Tom Palmer and I, as well as letterers and colorists, sometimes worked all night on material that had been due some time earlier. Tom never turned back pages due to lateness, and I didn't even have the option of doing so. We'd get exasperated, but we respected Neal and his work and did all we could to keep things moving along. (And, truth to tell, we knew Neal was burning more than a little midnight oil himself.)

As we come to the final chapter of the War, Neal and I again have basically irreconcilable diversions of memory on key events. I was astonished to read, in *CBA* #3, that after #96 he envisioned the War as going on for a much longer time. For my part, I have no doubt whatever that, while I hadn't mapped it out 'way in advance that #97 (nor #100, just to get rid of *that* tempting notion) would see the end of this saga, by the time Neal and I got to *Avengers* #97 I had definitely decided it would be the final issue of the story.

To me, the proof of the pudding is that, when Neal and I discussed #97, incorporating ideas I'd had seven issues earlier plus new ones one or both of us had, he told me he wanted to set #97 in Earth's far future, with a teacher instructing a new generation about the long-ago war between the Skrulls and the Kree. The last chapter of the War would be, in effect—a flashback!

I wasn't wild about this idea, but if Neal could do it and still tell the main story in 21 pages, I'd go along with it. I hadn't lost my faith in Neal's instincts. Far from it.



From Avengers *#96 ©1999 Marvel.*

As Neal was presumably working on the artwork for #97 and the deadline loomed, I was getting considerable grief from production manager Verpoorten, especially when, after a decent interval, no penciled pages had been delivered.

Without going into disputed details, I finally yielded to the inevitable. I wrote out a version of the plot (which up to then had been only a verbal discussion between Neal and me) and Special-Deliveryed it off to John Buscema, who was implored to pencil the issue as quickly as possible for Tom Palmer to embellish. Under pressure, John did so in less than a week.

Under the circumstances, I decided not to use Neal's futuristic framing sequence, since that would simply have thrown John an unneeded curve at a crucial stage. Otherwise, however, the plot was very much along the lines of what I felt Neal and I had agreed on.

Rick really *thinking about Golden Age heroes. From* Avengers *#97 ©2001 Marvel*

I did make a deal with Verpoorten, a longtime friend (if occasional production adversary) that, if Neal showed up with all or most of #97's pencils before John got too far into the issue, we'd find a way to use Neal's pages rather than John's. In those days, Martin Goodman would have blanched at paying two pencilers for duplicatory work, but I was hoping we could pull it off somehow. (I suspect there would have been a lengthy flashback sequence drawn by Buscema in a future issue.)

Or is there really somebody out there stupid enough to think that I *wanted* anyone but Neal Adams—yes, even the ultra-talented John Buscema—to draw the final chapter of this important story which Neal and I had shepherded together up to this point?

Perhaps I should have phoned Neal right away and told him I'd given John a plot, but by now, having failed to receive any pages, I'd probably gone into my we-gotta-get-the-damn-book-out mode. If, sadly from my viewpoint, Neal would later feel betrayed by *me*, at this point I'm sure I was feeling betrayed by *him*.

Maybe, in a sense, we inadvertently betrayed each other, more's the pity. I'm sure neither of us intended to do so.

While John was finishing the pencils, Neal came into the Marvel offices with a handful of pages of finished pencils or layouts—frankly, I forget which. I recall them as dealing with his futuristic framing sequence, but I won't swear to that part of it—only to the fact that it was just the bare beginnings of a past-due issue.

At that point I had to tell Neal we'd now have to go with Buscema-Palmer art. I was unhappy about it, but Verpoorten and I had to get the book out, and we still weren't sure we were going to make it in time. (For all I recall, maybe we *did* have to pay late charges on #97. If not, we made it just under the wire.)

John Buscema's pages were good; John's work was *always* good. Of course, he'd had to rush them, and he had no involvement with the subject matter such as Neal and I had, yet under the circumstances I think #97 worked out very well—far better than it had a right to:

In the Negative Zone, Rick found himself repulsing Annihilus with a blast emanating from his brain—though he had no idea *how*. As the three-way battle between Skrull and Kree and Avengers built to a climax, and Mar-Vell destroyed the Omni-Wave he'd built for the Skrull emperor, Rick was pulled back into our dimension by the Intelligence Supreme.

When Ronan ordered Kree soldiers to kill both of them, the I.S. prodded Rick to think of heroes who could save them. Recalling that barrelful of old comics he'd mentioned back in #92, Rick concentrated—

—and out of his head, like Athena from the skull of Zeus, sprung fully-realized reincarnations of those heroes!

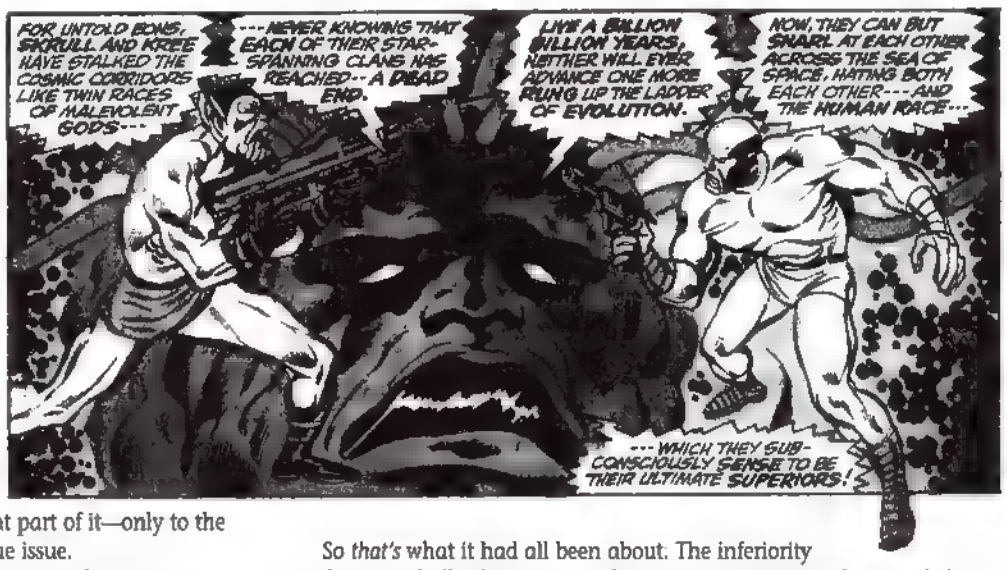
One was Captain America—not the Cap now fighting the Skrulls off in space, but the Cap of 1940s *Captain America Comics*—another was the original Human Torch—a third was the Sub-Mariner in the black trunks he wore throughout the '40s. And there were other heroes who hadn't been seen since then:

The pulp-magish Angel, who went back all the way to *Marvel Comics* #1 in 1939—the Blazing Skull, from 1942 *Mystic Comics*—the Fin, the second water-boy conceived by Namor's creator, Bill Everett—the original green-skinned Vision from *Marvel Mystery*—and the Patriot, one of several Cap-imitators from the pages of Timely Comics, the '40s name of Marvel Comics.

Yes, all eight were Timely heroes. I figured the heroes I'd had Sal Buscema draw in #92 were in the public domain, but I didn't want to chance a letter from a lawyer, so I stuck to homeboys. They mopped up the Kree soldiers, but they were only a delaying tactic—and a symptom of something far more crucial to the story.

At the I.S.'s command, Rick now threw out "a shimmering bolt of incredible brilliance—which fill[ed] both chamber and cosmos in the selfsame instant!" Amazingly, all Skrulls and Kree (even Mar-Vell) were suddenly rendered immobile, including those in the opposing space fleets. I.S. even showed Rick "H. Warren Craddock" back on Earth, haranguing an audience—then suddenly becoming still as a statue and reverting to his true "fourth-Skrull" shape, revealed for the first time. He had so incensed the listening crowd against aliens that they now swarmed over the Skrull in their midst and killed him.

The S.I. explained that, by inducing Mar-Vell to construct a Kree Omni-Wave device, he had unleashed powers that had lain dormant in *Rick* himself. Next came a panel, reproduced here, which I couldn't like better whether it were drawn by John Buscema or Neal Adams or Pablo Picasso. The S.I. explained what had really been at issue here, and it wasn't just that the Earth lay strategically midway between two star-flung empires:


FOR UNTOLD EONS, SKRULL AND KREE HAVE STALKED THE COSMIC CORRIDORS LIKE TWIN RACES OF MALEVOLENT GODS---
---NEVER KNOWING THAT EACH OF THEIR STAR-SPANNING CLANS WAS REACHED--A DEAD END.
LIVE A BILLION BILLION YEARS, NEITHER WILL EVER ADVANCE ONE MORE RUNG UP THE LADDER OF EVOLUTION.
NOW, THEY CAN BUT SNARL AT EACH OTHER ACROSS THE SEA OF SPACE, HATING BOTH EACH OTHER---AND THE HUMAN RACE---
---WHICH THEY SUB-CONSCIOUSLY SENSE TO BE THEIR ULTIMATE SUPERIORS!

999 Marvel Entertainment.

So *that's* what it had all been about. The inferiority complex to end *all* inferiority complexes. A pre-emptive strike intended to stop humanity from one day thrusting both Kree and Skrull aside like evolutionary deadwood.

Rick instinctively realized that "*any* human could have been stimulated to do what I did." He wasn't really the hero to end all heroes—rather, he was *everyman*. *Anyman*.

That's when he collapsed.

The Intelligence Supreme used his hyperspace powers to bring the Avengers into the Kree stronghold, and Mar-Vell vanished into Rick, giving his life force to save the youth's life. Captain Marvel would be back soon, even switching places with Rick Jones again—but he would no longer be doing it from the Negative Zone.

At which point the S.I. sent the Avengers back to Earth, where Nick Fury introduced them to the *real* H. Warren Craddock, captured earlier by Skrulls. Thor sensed that the S.I. had influenced "Craddock" into his anti-alien, anti-Avengers action, "to bring the Avengers into the fray."

For a big head on a TV screen in a broom closet, the Intelligence Supreme had proven one helluva puppeteer.

One Avenger had disappeared during the fray—Goliath—but that was a story for the next issue, as the Avengers stared starward.

And so ended the Kree-Skrull War.

Well, not quite.

With the deadline steamrollering toward us, I called in Gil Kane, who quickly penciled a cover showing Rick Jones conjuring up the Timely heroes. It was inked by Bill Everett, perhaps only the second time in his life that he worked on his two aquatic heroes Sub-Mariner and the Fin on the same page. (He'd recently drawn them both for a cover for my *Alter Ego*, Vol. 1, #11; but that drawing wouldn't be published till 1978, several years after Bill's untimely death.)

As cover copy, along with "Godhood's End," I wrote: "This is IT! The fearful finale of the SKRULL VS. KREE WAR!!"

Yes, that's right. Not "Kree-Skrull War," not even "Skrull-Kree War," but "Skrull vs. Kree War." Doesn't exactly roll trippingly off the tongue, does it? Through all those issues, I had never given the War an official name. When I finally did, I instinctively listed the Skrulls first, probably because they'd appeared earlier.

It was Marvel's readers, over the months and years, who gave the skirmish the name "Kree-Skrull War."

Letters on the Adams-drawn issues only began to be printed in #97. I was hailed for my "most outstanding attribute, aside from characteriza-

Rarely-seen Neal Adams cover to George Olshevsky's Avengers Index. *Note the inclusion of Valkyrie representing the Defenders. ©1999 Marvel Entertainment*

continued from page 85

tions .. [my] detailed concept of the master plot." Neal, of course, was complimented for his "peerless artistry," and there were references to a "Marvel Renaissance." There was already the beginning of a recognition that the War had been a turning point for Marvel, though mostly readers just seemed to ooh and ahh at the story and particularly at the art.

In #101 came the first reference I've found to the name by which the War would soon be known. Letter-writer Matt Graham of Granada Hills, California, referred to "the Kree-Skrull was."

Yes, that's right: "*was*"!

The first time the Kree-Skrull War was ever called that in a Marvel comic—and it fell victim to a *typo!*

But it didn't really matter The War had happened, and the merry Marvel Universe was just a wee bit more coherent.

Besides, it had made a helluva space opera.

In 1983 Marvel reprinted *Avengers* #93-97 in two slick-paper comics titled *The Kree-Skrull War starring The Avengers*. Tom Palmer inked seven pages of Walt Simonson pencils recapping #89-92, with summing-up prose by Alan Zelenetz. Walt and Bob Budiansky penciled new wraparound covers for both issues, also inked by Tom. An attempt was made to erase the feel of the five individual issues by dropping credits and logos from the splash pages—never a good idea, because it represents a falsification of what was originally published.

Still, they were a nice-looking pair of issues, and I'm surprised Marvel hasn't yet reprinted the epic in trade paperback form, preferably with #89-92 added, so that the entire Kree-Skrull War would be collected for the first time.

For me, Neal's and my *Avengers* collaboration remains one of a half dozen or so highlights in my 34 years in comics (Another, of course, would be our *X-Men*.) I hope he looks back on it fondly, as well, even if we will probably never agree on a few of the particulars.

Amazingly, despite the confused and frustrating (for both of us) way that our *Avengers* stint ended, we weren't done with each other quite yet. A few more collaborative efforts still lurked in our unglimpsed futures.

Maybe we were both gluttons for punishment, I fully as much as Neal. Or maybe we just kept telling ourselves: "Next time it'll all work out right!"

Or, as Ernest Hemingway has a character say at the end of *The Sun Also Rises*: "Yes, isn't it pretty to think so?"

A/E is a perfect complement to *CBA*. "A Fantastic First" and the Topps parodies were a lot of fun. The *FF* story synopses should help to quiet some of the "wannabe-know-it-alls" who feel Jack Kirby did everything and Stan did little or nothing. I adore both men tremendously, but it's good to see (some more) physical evidence on Stan's behalf. From my viewpoint, they were both fantastic.

In the future I'm sure your readers would love to see more little-seen or unpublished stories from Marvel's and DC's good old days. The unpublished "Dante's Inferno" (by Steranko) and "Starhawk" (unpublished *Marvel Super-Heroes* #21 by Thomas and Dan Adkins) have been in the vault long enough and it's high time, etc. Printing stuff like that in installments will keep your readers coming back for more. Keep up the great work!

How about articles on the best unfinished or never-begun stories/projects you saw at Marvel and DC? And how about a good word for the letterers? Gaspar Saladino, Sam Rosen, and Artie Simek (among others) deserve a good mention for all those great logos and such they did over the years.

Jerry Boyd
Mountain View, California

We'll check with Jim Steranko about "Dante's Inferno," Jerry, though I suspect he may have plans of his own for it. And except for the cover of that Starhawk origin drawn by Dan Adkins, I'm not sure any of the story remains in existence, though I used to have copies of many of the pages, complete with proofreading marks. Maybe it will turn up yet. As I mentioned in a recent letters page in Comic Book Marketplace, *Martin Goodman took one look at that beautiful cover, which contained the "three R's" he hated—rockets, robots, and rayguns—and cancelled the already lame* Marvel Super-Heroes! *So the name Starhawk, which I'd devised for that origin story, was available later to be used for a hero in "Guardians of the Galaxy."*

The other suggestions you make are along the lines of what we want to do, as well. I've already been talking with Jean Simek (once Jean Izzo), herself a comic book letterer for some years now, about her father Artie, the original Marvel letterer in 1961.

NOTE:*For fans who have access to the Internet, Heroic Publishing is currently hosting an* Alter Ego *comic book website at:*

http://www.heroicpub.com/alterego.

There you can find an online version of the original four-issue 1986 Alter Ego *mini-series from First Comics, a message from Yours Truly, an Alter Ego chat room, a bulletin board, and back issues for sale.*

You might also want to check out the rest of the Heroic Publishing website. There's a lot of good comic book material being displayed.

In closing, I want to mention that, along with The All-Star Companion *mentioned in V2#2, TwoMorrows and I are busy prepping a full-length* Alter Ego Special, *to be published a few short months from now!*

Among other things, it will examine the creation of the Silver Age Atom—Wonder Woman scripts by Gardner Fox and "Charles Moulton" for All-Star Comics *#13 back in 1942—a 1971 Silver Surfer adventure that was published only in France—and fabulous Jerry Ordway-Mike Machlan character designs for* Infinity, Inc.!

All this, plus Grass Green's "Da Frantic Four" (the first parody ever of Marvel super-heroes, a long-lost classic), plus interviews with Irwin Hasen (the second artist ever to draw the Golden Age Green Lantern) and Larry Lieber (brother Stan Lee's co-writer on many of the earliest Marvel comics)! All this—and maybe more, if we can squeeze it in!

And don't worry—we've got a few interesting items left over for A/E Vol. 2, #4, as well—starting with a JSA/Mr. Monster cover by Michael T. Gilbert!

COMIC BOOK ARTIST
Presents

Alter Ego™

Vol. 2, No. 5
Summer 1998

Special
BATMAN
ISSUE!

Yet Another Year of the Bat

A LOOK AT OUR SPOTLIGHTED SUPER-HERO AND A FOND FARE-THEE-WELL TO *COMIC BOOK ARTIST*

by Roy Thomas

In this 60th anniversary of the first Batman story, in *Detective Comics* #27, perhaps it's only fitting that this final issue of *Alter Ego*, Volume 2, deals with the super-hero who is generally referred to as "Bob Kane's creation"—and also calls into question whether the Dark Knight *was* fully Kane's creation.

Actually, I believe most thinking people in and around the comic book industry have already answered that question for themselves in recent years, and the now generally-accepted answer is:

"Not entirely."

No person of good will desires to rob Kane of the credit for what seems to be indisputably his—the initial concept of a masked hero called Bat-Man

And he is given that credit despite the hero's many popular-culture forebears, as remarked upon in Arlen Schumer's article in this issue and as illustrated on our cover (beautifully photographed by David O'Connor).

But still, there was this guy *Bill Finger*, see...

And Bill Finger had this uncanny way, six decades back, of popping up in all these places that would turn out to be inconvenient for all the one-hero-one-creator boosters. That's his name up there on the very first Green Lantern story in 1940... and on the first Wildcat story in 1941... in both cases, with the blessing of DC editor Sheldon Mayer and the artists (Marty Nodell/"Mart Dellon" and Irwin Hasen, respectively).

Yet somehow Bill Finger's name never made it onto a Batman comic in the old days... and only rarely even in *these*.

In a wildly self-revelatory moment, Bob Kane admits in his co-written autobiography that Finger wrote that first Batman story, and goes on to state: "Now that my long-time friend and collaborator is gone, I must admit that Bill never received the fame and recognition he deserved."

Ah, yes: "Now that [he's] gone."

"Now it can be told!" as the post-WWII books and movies used to scream.

But why not in 1939?

More to the point: Why not in *1999*?

Beginning in the 1960s, *Alter Ego* founder Jerry G. Bails, and later comics writer/editor Mike W. Barr, were among the first to openly champion Bill Finger as the co-creator of Batman. Theirs were brave and lonely voices.

By almost any sane standard, Bill *was* the Dark Knight's co-creator

And wouldn't it be nice if, in this 60th anniversary year of Batman's first appearance, DC Comics made it *official*?

Besides all the Batman-related material in this final edition of *A/E* to be piggybacked with *Comic Book Artist*—two pieces by Arlen Schumer, an interview with Bill Finger's late son, and Bill Schelly's interview with longtime Batman ghost Sheldon Moldoff (accompanied by a study of a memorable Finger-Moldoff story)—this issue also contains the last of my trio of articles on my collaborations with the great Neal Adams in the late 1960s and 1970s.

And so *Alter Ego*, Vol. 2, comes to an end.

It's been a most pleasant ride; and, as most readers of this Writer/Editorial already know, *A/E* is merely switching horses in mid-stream.

For, by the time this issue of *CBA* goes on sale, *Alter Ego*, Volume 3, #1, will have already been on sale for a week or three—a full 84-page package dealing primarily with the Golden and Silver Ages of Comics, but with some Bronze banterings as well. But, as you clamber through this issue, you'll see our ad; and if it doesn't convince you to give the full-fledged *A/E* a try, no amount of hard-sell in mere cold type is likely to do any good.

Bob Kane's re-creation of his seminal Batman panel in Detective Comics *#31, drawn that same year. Batman ©1999 DC Comics.*

As Jack Kirby once said so immortally: "Don't ask! Just buy it!"

At this point, I want to thank publisher John Morrow and *CBA* editor Jon B. Cooke for inviting me aboard back in January of 1998—and I must thank Bill Schelly and Michael T. Gilbert and Gil Kane and Joe Kubert and all the other contributors and cooperaters who helped make these five issues of *A/E* a lot of fun for me and, hopefully, for others.

And I *am* grateful to them. Really I am.

But saying thanks is a bit like saying goodbye—and all the above gentlemen and several more will be very much part and parcel of the *third* volume of *A/E*, as well.

So I'll simply say:

Alter Ego, Volume 2, is dead!

Long live *Alter Ego*, Volume 3!

Bestest,

NOTE: Send any letters, comments, original artwork, or potential contributions to:

Roy Thomas
Rt. 3, Box 468
St. Matthews, SC 29135

Fax. (803) 826-6501
E-mail: roydann@oburg.net

Our coin of the realm is free issues of *Alter Ego*. Help us share the ongoing history of comic books—their heroes, their creators—with a new generation.

The rest of this never-published 1949 Green Lantern page by Golden Age great Irwin Hasen can be seen in Alter Ego, *Vol 3, #1—on sale now! ©1999 DC Comics.*

YE EDITOR HERE: *Bill Schelly's piece in* A/E *Vol. 2, #3, concerning Biljo White's 1960s fanzine* Batmania *spotlighted both a 1965 letter from Bob Kane denying writer Bill Finger's claim to have co-created Batman in 1939, and a number of quotes from the earlier article written by Jerry G. Bails (A/E's first editor) which had provoked Kane's missive.*

Here, composed from two e-mails, is our editor emeritus' response to Schelly's examination of Jerry's 1965 piece, and to a few other items in the previous issues of this magazine:

Dear Roy:

Bill Schelly commented in the recent *CBA/AE* that I may have overreached in my closing remark in the essay "A Finger in Every Plot," when I said in effect that those who long for the early version of Gotham's Guardian are "hungering for the Batman as created by Bill Finger." Bill Schelly was being his customary accommodating self, but I stand by my statement and the implied proposition that Bill Finger was the major creative force behind The Batman. I could list quite a few facts not covered in the piece to defend that judgment, but my conclusion would still be a judgment call—not a question of fact. Here are the facts on which I base my judgment:

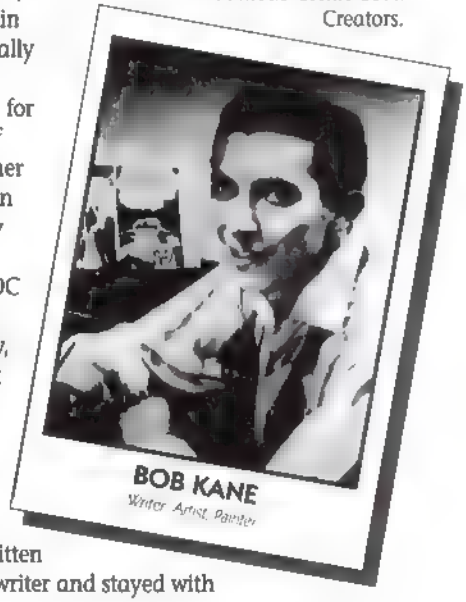
Fact: The visual concept of the Joker was taken from a book in Bill's library, *The Man Who Laughs,* by Victor Hugo. It contains a photo [*from the 1927 movie version, starring Conrad Veidt*] that *is* the model for the visual interpretation of the Joker. He gave Kane and Jerry Robinson the book for reference, and the famous shot of the Joker in *Batman* #1 is a perfect swipe from the book. I saw both book and photo when I interviewed Bill in his Greenwich Village apartment.

Fact: All the accouterments I listed (fins on gauntlets, utility belt, etc.) Bill claimed to have added. Check the Batman drawings in the very first story in the *Batman Archives, Volume I,* to see that Kane's original conception of the costume lacked the gauntlets. Every one of the additions to Batman's costume that I mentioned were Finger additions.

Fact: Bill maintained (well into the 1960s) a file of Douglas Fairbanks Sr. photo stills. He showed me the file and said that he would attach selected photos to finished scripts for Bob and his assistants to use as models. I recognized pose after pose. The stills I saw (and had never seen before that date) were the familiar swinging poses that characterized the Acro-Batman that was so popular in my youth.

Fact: Bill showed me a page from a loose-leaf notebook with dozens of possible names for Batman's sidekick. They were written in every direction on the sheet. He kept the sheet along with dozens of other early Batman memorabilia (*e.g.*, the Bat-Cave) to illustrate how he agonized over the naming of the Batman's partner. I recall only a few of the names on the sheet: Socko, Tiger, Wildcat. (The latter name was used later when Bill created the character Wildcat as a backup behind Wonder Woman in *Sensation Comics.* The character survives to this day, bearing few signs of ageing.) There was no "Robin" on the sheet, which jibes with Jerry Robinson's claim to have come up with that name. Clearly, however, Bill was "creating" the sidekick in his head *before* Robin was officially named.

Bob Kane. From Eclipse's 1992 card set Famous Comic Book Creators.



Fact: Bill was ghost-writing for Kane well before the creation of Batman. He was writing the other features Kane put his name to in early DC comics, such as "Rusty and His Pals."

Fact: When the editors at DC learned that Finger was writing Batman, they hired him directly, and Shelly Mayer made a point to recognize Bill as the co-creator of the Green Lantern.

Fact: The weird and interesting villains that inhabited the early Batman strip first appeared in stories written by Bill Finger. Bill was the first writer and stayed with the strip through 1968.

My conclusion: In the case of Batman, it was the writer, Bill Finger, who fleshed out the characters of Batman, Bruce Wayne, Commissioner Gordon, and created the interesting villains and plots that caught the fancy of readers. Kane's coming up with the initial concept, already heavily utilized in pulp fiction, is a thin basis to claim sole creator credit. It was Finger who fleshed out the character and gave him a life, adversaries, and stories that captured the imagination. My parting shot about longing for the Batman as created by Bill Finger is one that I will stand by. Any two-bit reader of comics can come up with a score of new characters. It's the execution of the idea that counts. Had it not been for these elements, Batman would have been just another one of countless costumed "also-rans."

Bob Kane claimed that his name alone on the "Batman" strip was proof in itself of his long-standing claim to be the sole creator of Batman. This is as ludicrous as Bill Clinton's protestations. In every real sense, Bill Finger was the co-creator of Batman. In my opinion, he was more important to the early success of Batman than Kane. Kane

continued on page 146

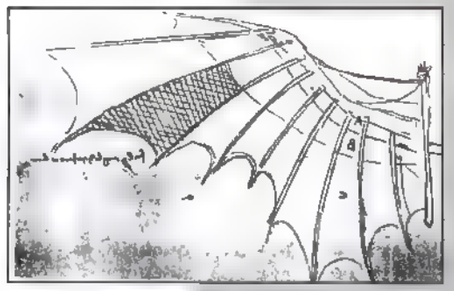
The "Bat-Man" Cover Story

THE TALE OF BOB KANE'S DARKNIGHT DETECTIVE THAT "COULD-HAVE-BEEN"

by Arlen Schumer

Bob Kane's recent passing made me mourn more for Bill. Finger, who, by all accounts, was the uncredited co-creator of Batman. Finger, who passed away in 1974, had as much to do with the creation of Batman as artist Joe Shuster had with Superman. Though Finger was a writer, the visual suggestions he made to Kane's first "Bat-Man" drawing were so key that, without them, the character might never have been published. To test my theory, I set out to recreate that mythical first drawing of Kane's

According to Kane, the impetus for the creation of Batman came from a meeting with DC editor Vincent Sullivan (also recently deceased), who had made the decision prior to publish Siegel and Shuster's Superman, which Kane claims Sullivan told him was earning his creators $800 a week apiece.



"I was only making $35-50 a week at the time," Kane recounted to writer Tom Andrae in 1989's memoir *Batman & Me*. "My God, if I could make that kind of money!"

Sullivan himself recalled, in an article written by Will Murray in *Comicscene* #52, that "Bob was astounded to hear that these two fellows, Siegel and Shuster, were making so much money with Superman. Of course, there was no way I could confirm this, either, because I was never made privy to any financial dealings. He said, 'I think I can do something as good,' and I said, 'Well, go home and see if you can!'"

Kane continued, "So over the weekend I laid out a kind of naked super-hero on the page, with a figure that looked like Superman or Flash Gordon. I placed a sheet of tracing paper over him so that I could create new costumes that might strike my fancy..." Here is where my re-creation began proper. I needed to find a figure of either character, published prior to '39, that Kane might have used as his model figure

Even though Bill Finger went on record for Jim Steranko's 1970 *History of Comics* saying that Kane's first "Bat-Man" drawing "...looked very much like Superman...," I decided to pursue a figure of Flash Gordon instead, because Kane admitted he had been actively drawing Flash knockoffs at the time, even bringing some to that fateful Friday cocktail meeting with Sullivan. "I was a great copyist and he said, 'You know, Bob, your stuff looks just like Alex Raymond's...'"

So I went to my collection of Kitchen Sink *Flash Gordon* hardcovers hoping to find any figure of Flash that could easily serve as Kane's foundation for the figure Finger (and Kane) would later describe as a character "...with kind of...reddish tights, I believe, with boots...no gloves, no gauntlets... with a small domino mask, swinging on a rope. He had two stiff wings sticking out, looking like bat wings."

To my surprise, not only did I find a figure of Flash that would work in that position—I found *the* figure. I found what had to be Bob Kane's swipe for the cover of *Detective Comics* #27!

"In a mad attempt to save Dale, Flash swings downward..." begins the caption to panel 5 of the January 17, 1937 Sunday page (*Flash Gordon* Volume 2, page 82), and there it is, Raymond's Flash, his arm entwined in a Tarzan-like vine, head down, legs bent at the knee, looking almost *exactly* like the famous Batman cover figure—the minor discrepancy being only that instead of holding a criminal in a headlock, Flash is extending his arm firing a gun.

I felt I had discovered some sort of Golden Age Rosetta Stone, bolstered by Kane's own admission to Murray that this first drawing was "...pretty much the way you see it on the *Detective Comics* #27 cover."

Although Kane described his Bat-Man's "stiff wings" as being "attached to his arms," for a clearer connection to the Da Vinci source Kane made popular, I took a liberal amount of artistic license with the wings by tracing them (much like Kane might have done) from a photocopy of a reproduction of one of DaVinci's many bat wing drawings, which I had already researched—*[for his "Graphic History of Batman" exhibit, a series of 10 2'x4' panels Arlen designed at the now sadly-defunct Words & Pictures Museum in 1997—and reproduced in color in the special Batman 60th Anniversary Issue of* Comic Book Marketplace *#70—end of plug by Ye Editor!]*—which served to free them from the arms to suit the needs of my layout and composition of my design concept: an overhead shot of what Bob Kane's drawing board might have looked like sometime 'way before Bat-Man's first published appearance in May 1939

Finger claimed he was the one who suggested Kane turn the "stiff wings" into "a cape and scallop the edges so it would flow out behind him when he ran and would look like bat wings," while Kane seems to use the "editorial we." He said, "As Bill and I talked, we realized these wings would get cumbersome when Bat Man was in action, and changed them into a cape, scalloped to look like bat wings..." Either way, taken along with his suggestion to change Kane's red "union suit"—"Color it dark gray to make it look more ominous," Kane claims Finger told him—Finger put his stamp on two key aspects of Batman's indelible iconography

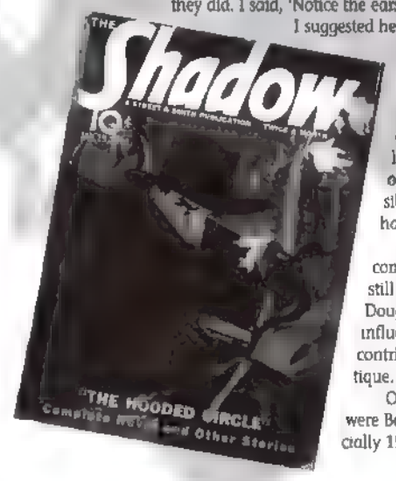
Neither Kane nor Finger describes any kind of belt on this version of the character, so I took the liberty to keep the utility belt from Kane's published Bat-Man because it looked good.

To flesh out the rest of the drawing, I based my "small domino mask" on The Phantom's, since Kane later confided that "...the *New York Journal* carried a feature that also influenced my creation of Batman. Written by Lee Falk and drawn by Ray Moore, The Phantom wore a...slim black mask to conceal his identity." Even if Kane described the mask being "...like the one Robin later wore," that's pretty close to The Phantom's as well (though my personal definition of "domino mask" is the style worn by Gil Kane's Green Lantern).

The *Phantom* scrap is from a panel in the only Phantom collection I was able to reference, an oversize 1977 Pacific Comics Club Publication of strips that originally appeared in 1940—the same year the Shadow pulp novel I tossed into my cover design, to represent the character's major influence on Batman, was published; both are conceptually, not chronologically, correct. I placed the Shadow book over the Bat-Man logotype I traced from the first panel of the character's debut story, *Detective* #27's "The Case of The Chemical Syndicate," since Finger described there being under Kane's figure "... a big sign... Bat-Man."

Of course, I had to put eyes in the holes in the mask, even though they make the character look like a dork, because Kane originally did. But thankfully Finger entreated Kane to "...take the eyeballs out and just put slits for eyes to make him look more mysterious," indelible iconographic contribution #3 for Finger

Kane himself supports this account, which relates to the later appearance of Bat-Man's distinctive cowl and ears, as well. Neither man described whether there was a Phantom-like hood over the character's head, so I kept Raymond's original Flash Gordon head of blonde locks. Finger goes on to say, "I got *Webster's Dictionary* down off the shelf and was hoping they would have a drawing of a bat, and sure enough they did. I said, 'Notice the ears, why don't we duplicate the ears?' I suggested he bring the cowl nosepiece down..." (If you're scoring, that's iconographic contribution #4 for Finger!) By pure coincidence, I just happen to have in my library a copy of a *Webster's Dictionary* published in 1936, with the tiny drawing of a bat in the definition—quite possibly the same edition Finger might have pulled off of Kane's shelf!



Rounding out my cover design concept is a black-&-white glossy film still from *The Mark of Zorro*, the 1920 Douglas Fairbanks Sr. classic that was so influential in both Kane's and Finger's contributions to Bat-Man's total mystique.

Other influential films cited by Kane were Bela Lugosi's 1931 *Dracula* and especially 1931's *The Bat Whispers* which featured a black-robed villain wearing a bat-shaped headpiece. "I could never forget the bat-costume..." Kane later remembered. "It helped inspire me to create Batman." Yet if that's so, why did Finger have to go to the dictionary for bat ear reference, corroborated by Kane's testimony that "Bill said, 'Why not make him look more like a bat and put a hood on him ..."?

This points to other discrepancies in Kane's oft-retold version of Batman's origins, which include the oft-reproduced 1934- and '39-dated drawings, ostensibly produced by Kane. The '34 drawing, which Kane has always claimed he retrieved from the bottom of an old trunk, after he "remembered" that he had done it while tracing over his Superman/Flash Gordon figure, contains a "bat-man" with cowl and bat-ears that looks closer to the published character than Finger's *and* Kane's descriptions of the Bat-Man prototype. So if Kane already had this drawing in front of him while sketching, why did his newer drawing not have the cowl and bat-ears?

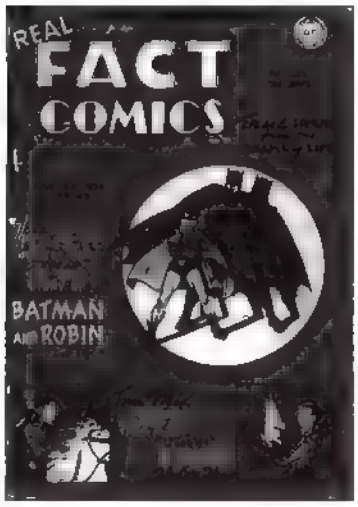
Both '39 drawings have always looked more polished to my eye, more like later-Kane, than Kane's actually-published drawings of Batman in 1939's books—and the quote lettered by Kane on one of the '39 pieces, "First innovative sketches influenced by Da Vinci's flying machine glider," has always irked me: coming across awkwardly vain, like someone trying awfully hard to prove something... after the fact. Which brings us to some questionable "Real Facts"... just turn the page!

Real Facts & True Lies

THE TRJE STORY BEHIND "THE TRUE STORY OF BATMAN AND ROB N"

by Arlen Schumer

Our speculation [*in the previous article*] into what Batman might have been like without Bill Finger, brings us to the ultimate "after the fact" document of Batman's origin, "The True Story of Batman and Robin! How a Big-Time Comic is Born!," the cover story of *Real Fact Comics* #5, published by DC in 1946. I came across this oddity about 10 years ago at a comic convention—the reworking of Jack Burnley's classic Batman and Robin spotlight cover from *Batman* #9 leapt out at me from a back issue bin.

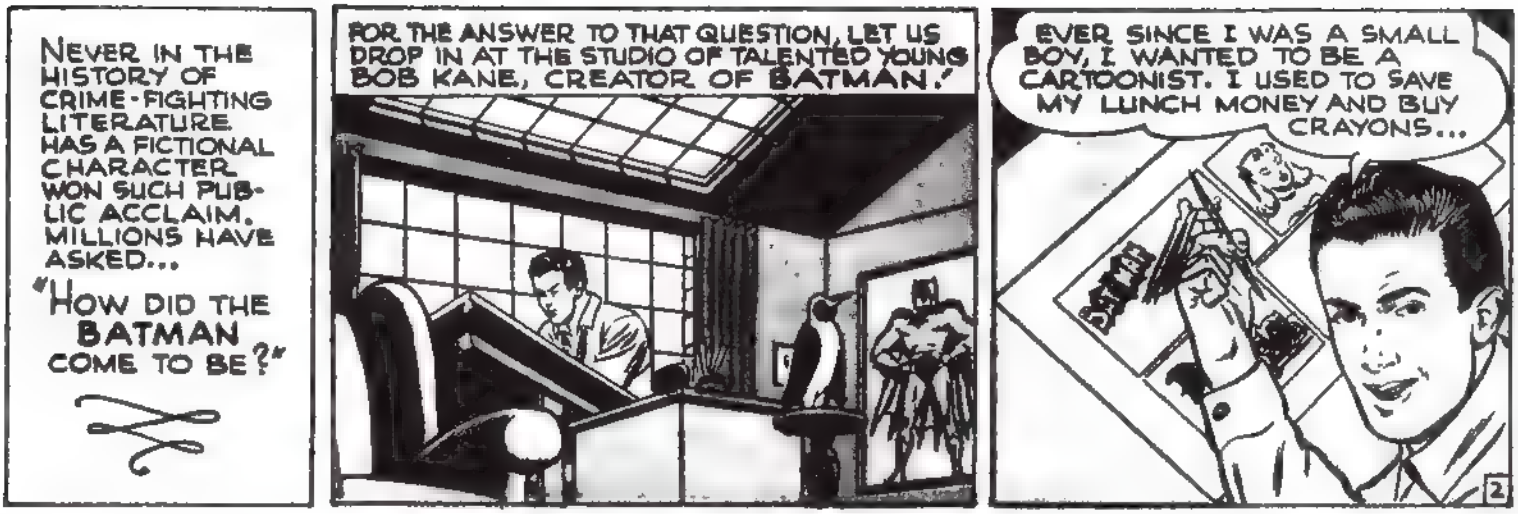


©1999 DC Comics

The five-page story, illustrated by the legendary DC artist Win Mortimer, written in omniscient,

REAL FACT COMICS
The true story of BATMAN AND ROBIN!
HOW A BIG-TIME COMIC IS BORN!
IN 1939, A NEW CHAMPION OF LAW AND ORDER APPEARED ON THE FICTION HORIZON, A COLORFUL CRIME-FIGHTER KNOWN AS— BATMAN!
SUCH POPULARITY DID THIS CAPED LAWMAN WIN THAT THREE NATIONAL MAGAZINES RECORDED HIS EXPLOITS!
I'LL TAKE DETECTIVE COMICS, BATMAN AND WORLD'S FINEST!
I'LL BET YOU'RE A BATMAN FAN!

©1999 DC Comics

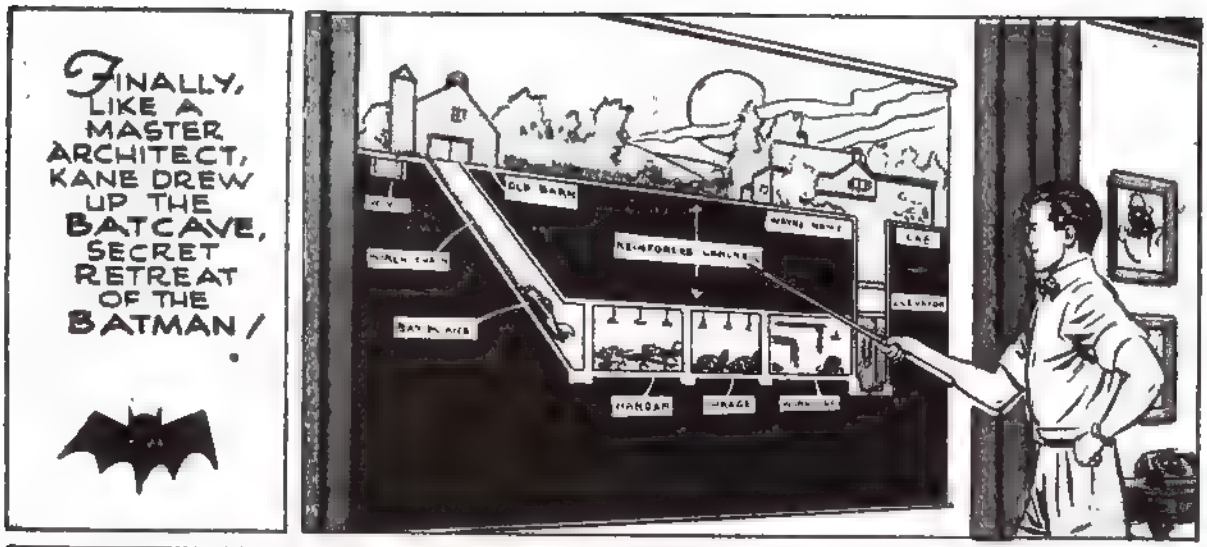

NEVER IN THE HISTORY OF CRIME-FIGHTING LITERATURE HAS A FICTIONAL CHARACTER WON SUCH PUBLIC ACCLAIM. MILLIONS HAVE ASKED...
"HOW DID THE BATMAN COME TO BE?"
FOR THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION, LET US DROP IN AT THE STUDIO OF TALENTED YOUNG BOB KANE, CREATOR OF BATMAN.'
EVER SINCE I WAS A SMALL BOY, I WANTED TO BE A CARTOONIST. I USED TO SAVE MY LUNCH MONEY AND BUY CRAYONS...
BATMAN
2
©1999 DC Comics

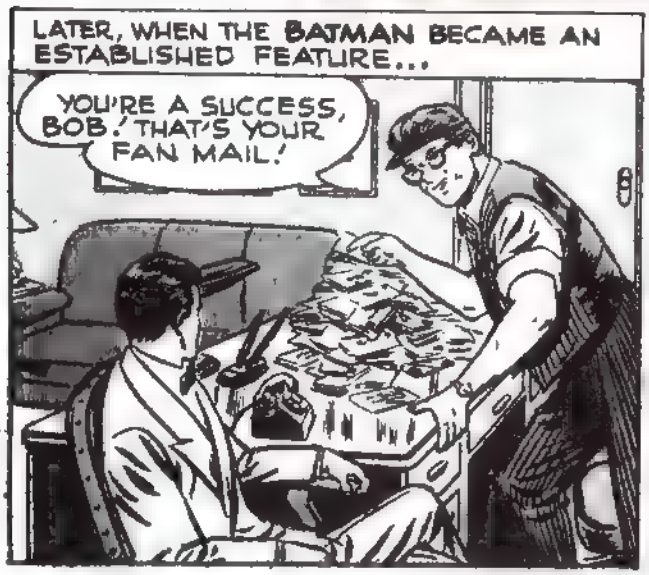
uncredited house organ prose, details the supposed creation of all the major elements of the Batman legend up to that time. It's a whopper of a tale—and that's an understatement.

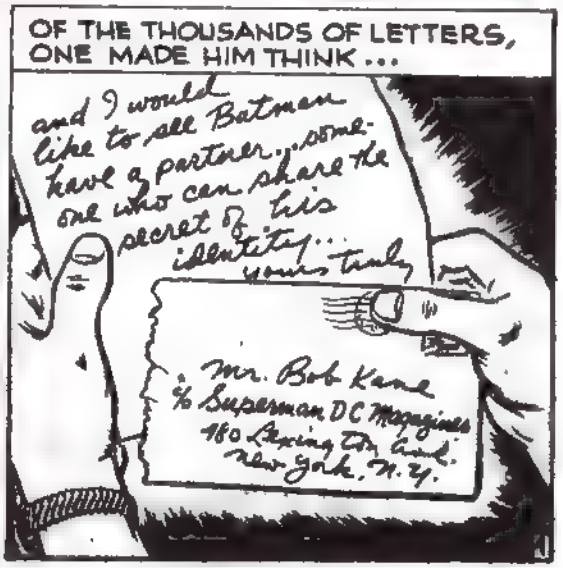
Speculation has it that since the story was created and published the same year Jerry Siegel initiated his lawsuit against DC following their publishing his Superboy concept while he was away in the service, the two are interrelated; supposedly Siegel asked Kane to join him and Shuster in wresting control of their creations from DC, but Kane refused. Perhaps the *Real Fact* story was DC's way of staking its claim to ownership of the character, insuring that Kane—and only Kane—would be considered the one legitimate Batman originator, akin to a publisher printing an "ashcan" issue of a title to secure copyright.

This altered-state of history was maintained by DC—and especially by Kane himself in numerous public utterances—up until Finger's death in 1974. Only then, after Finger died almost penniless, feeling "disheartened by the lack of major accomplishments in his career," according to Kane in his '89 memoir, feeling "he had not used his creative potential to its fullest and that success had passed him by," *only then* did Kane begin his partial reinstatement

REAL FACT COMICS
"IN HIGH SCHOOL, I DREW POSTERS FOR SAFETY CAMPAIGNS."
WHAT ARE YOU DRAWING NOW, BOB?
JUST A LITTLE SKETCH TO HELP PUT ACROSS FIRE PREVENTION WEEK.
AN AVID READER OF DETECTIVE FICTION — YOUNG KANE WAS ALSO INSPIRED BY THE EXPLOITS OF TRUE-TO-LIFE MANHUNTERS..
GEE, BOB—YOU'RE ALWAYS READING G-MEN AND SCOTLAND YARD CASES.
I HAVE SOMETHING IN MIND, LARRY. BE OVER AT MY HOUSE TONIGHT.
THAT EVENING...
YOU MEAN YOU WANT ME TO PUT ON THIS COSTUME YOUR MOTHER MADE? WHY, BOB?
JUST PUT IT ON. I'LL EXPLAIN LATER.
I'M SKETCHING A NEW CHARACTER—A CREATURE OF THE NIGHT—BATMAN! HE'LL BE A DARING, ACROBATIC HERO—A SUPER-SLEUTH WHO, IN A SECRET IDENTITY, WILL FIGHT CRIME.'
WEEKS LATER, AT THE EDITORIAL OFFICES OF SUPERMAN DC MAGAZINES.
YOU'VE CREATED AN EXCITING CHARACTER, SON. I THINK WE CAN DO SOMETHING WITH HIM.
UNDER EXPERT EDITORIAL GUIDANCE, KANE BEGAN TO MOLD HIS CARTOON CREATION INTO A DYNAMIC PERSONALITY..
THE STAGE FOR MY STORIES WILL BE GOTHAM CITY—AND THIS MODEL REPLICA SHOULD HELP ME VISUALIZE IT.' I WANT EVERYTHING TO BE AUTHENTIC, BASED ON SCIENTIFIC FACTS.
3
©1999 DC Comics






OF THE THOUSANDS OF LETTERS, ONE MADE HIM THINK...
and I would like to all Batmen have a partner... someone who can share the secret of his identity... yours truly
Mr. Bob Kane
% Superman DC Magazines
480 Lexington Ave.
New York, N.Y.

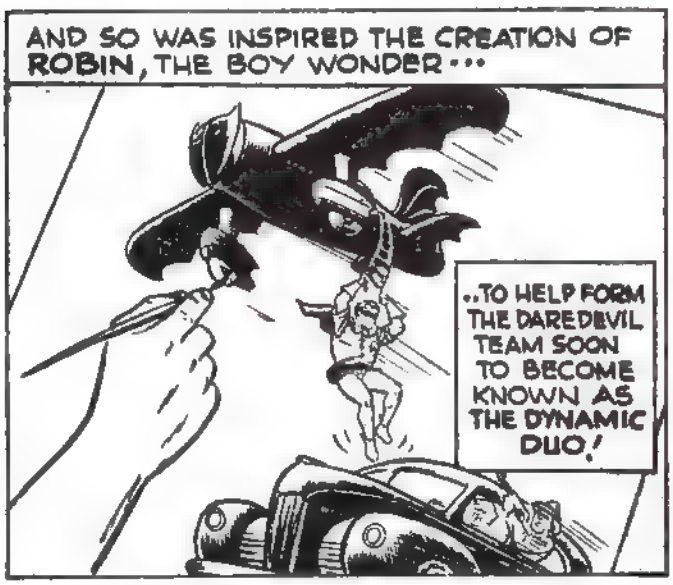
©1999 DC Comics

of Bill Finger's collaborative role in creating The Batman as we know him.

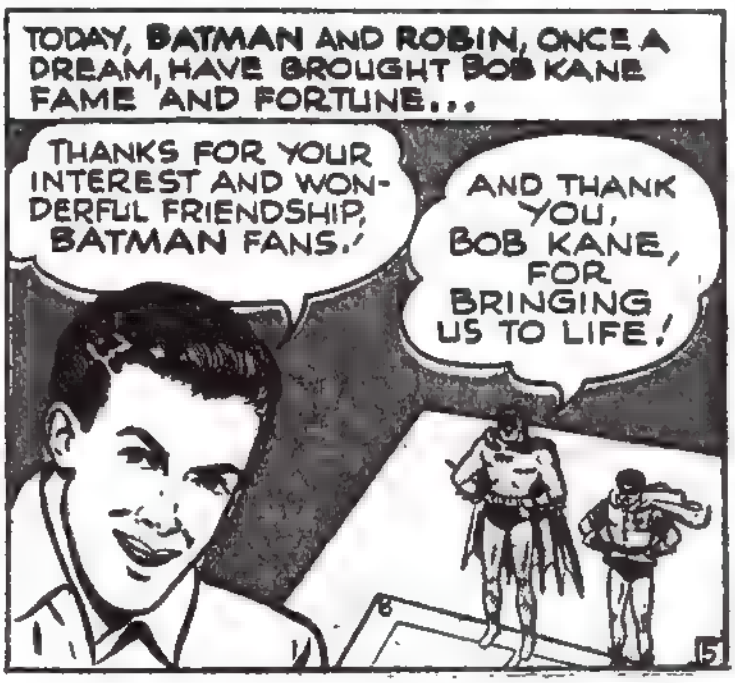
I say "partial," because the same paragraph in *Batman & Me* that begins with Kane stating, "Now that my long-time friend and collaborator is gone, I must admit that Bill never received the fame and recognition he deserved," ends with Kane noting that, "Superman... carried both Siegel and Shuster's names because they had collaborated in creating him," ignoring all the evidence presented detailing Finger's contributions.

The panels and pages printed here of the *Real Fact* story give you a good idea of the grandiose hyperbole and outrageous manipulation of the facts bordering on the absurd, the dada, the surreal—a fair description of the panels wherein Kane is shown sketching his friend "Larry" wearing a complete Batman costume Kane's mother made!!!—which serve to gargantuantly inflate Kane's sole role as creator of the Bat-mythos.

You'll laugh... you'll cry. Read it and weep for Bill Finger, the true co-creator of Batman.


AND SO WAS INSPIRED THE CREATION OF ROBIN, THE BOY WONDER...
..TO HELP FORM THE DAREDEVIL TEAM SOON TO BECOME KNOWN AS THE DYNAMIC DUO!

©1999 DC Comics


TODAY, BATMAN AND ROBIN, ONCE A DREAM, HAVE BROUGHT BOB KANE FAME AND FORTUNE...
THANKS FOR YOUR INTEREST AND WONDERFUL FRIENDSHIP, BATMAN FANS!
AND THANK YOU, BOB KANE, FOR BRINGING US TO LIFE!
15

©1999 DC Comics

FROM MARS TO ZAMBOULA

THE THOMAS/ADAMS COLLABORATIONS ON "WAR OF THE WORLDS" AND CONAN THE BARBARIAN

by Roy Thomas

*[**NOTE:** This piece was originally written for inclusion in our previous issue, which dealt with the Thomas-Adams collaborations on* The X-Men, *"The Inhumans," and* The Avengers, *but was omitted there due to lack of room.]*

I consider it a tribute to the stubborn, unflinching respect Neal Adams and I felt for each other's talents that, despite the friction over *Avengers* #97 and a few earlier items, we were soon back collaborating on a Marvel series.

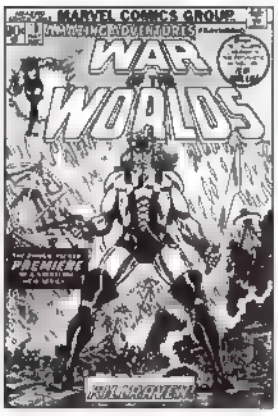
Sometime in 1971 or early '72, even with *Conan the Barbarian* (by Barry Smith and myself) off to a slow start saleswise, Stan Lee asked me to submit a list of ideas for new comics, for consideration by himself and Martin Goodman, who was still publisher through spring of '72.

One of those ideas was "The War of the Worlds."

The 1951 George Pal movie version of *War of the Worlds*, much as I loved its manta-ray-shaped flying-machines, had zilch to do with my wanting to create such a series. Rather, the comic was to be based on concepts taken directly from H.G. Wells' 1898 *novel*—in particular from the chapter he called "The Man on Putney Hill."

Therein, a visionary artilleryman tells Wells' first-person narrator what he thinks our planet will be like under the conquering Martians: Earthmen living in drains beneath the surface and fighting a guerrilla war against the aliens—turncoat Earthmen ruling and even hunting the rebels—the use of humans by the Martians for both sport and food.

From this material, I hoped to develop a series to appeal to readers who liked Marvel and DC comics based on the fiction of Robert E. Howard and Edgar Rice Burroughs. In fact, a secondary influence on my concept was the ERB-inspired series "The Lost World," which ran for years in the *Planet Comics* of the 1940s-50s, with a hero named Hunt Bowman.



©1999 Marvel Entertainment

My idea was that the Martians come back to Earth a hundred years after their first invasion, which the novel had placed "early in the twentieth century." By this time they have gained immunity to our bacteria (which, as everyone knows, killed the Martians in Wells' book), so they speedily conquer humankind.

The series was slated to debut in *Amazing Adventures* #17, replacing a solo feature starring The Beast, from the defunct *X-Men* title. Aware that we'd need just the right artist if "The War of the Worlds" wasn't going to pale beside *Conan* and DC's ERB comics, I phoned Neal and told him the concept (including the general gist of the artilleryman's speculations). When he evinced an interest in drawing the series, I suggested we get together soon to talk it over.

The very next day, Neal showed up at the Marvel offices—with a whole plotline and even a lead character already in place in his own mind.

Much as I wanted Neal to draw this feature, this time I found I couldn't go along with all his ideas, as a few of them violated the H.G. Wells precepts I saw as the basis of the series I'd envisioned. For instance, Neal wanted to give the Martians a higher state of technology than they had in the novel. Since they were a dying race, I was insistent that their civilization should have remained static during the intervening century. I wanted to use Wells' Martians at exactly the technological level they had in his novel... no more, no less.

PROLOGUE: 2018 A.D.
STEEL UPON STEEL! A SOUND RELATIVELY NEW BENEATH THESE BATTLE-SCARRED CITY STREETS,
STEEL UPON STEEL! FOR ONE HUNDRED YEARS, A SOUND UNFAMILIAR TO THE AVERAGE FIGHTING MAN,
STEEL UPON STEEL! NOW THE WAR-CRY OF A NEW BREED OF MEN--MEN WHOSE LIVES HAVE BEEN SHATTERED, EVEN AS THE CITY AROUND THEM HAS BEEN SHATTERED--MEN WHOSE LIVES HAVE BEEN FORGED BY A WAR THEY WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND,
STEEL UPON STEEL! THE WAR-CRY OF ONE SPARCHAL MAN, A CRIMSON-HAIRED DEMON NAMED KOLLARIVEN!

And it started so beautifully, too! Neal's splash page (inked by Frank Chiaramonte) for "The War of the Worlds" in Amazing Adventures *#18. ©1999 Marvel Entertainment*

Other notions of Neal's did, however, fit in quite well with what I wanted, particularly at this early formative stage. His somewhat Hunt Bowman-like hero, who wanders around gathering up scrap and discarded gadgets for use against the Martians (as he outlined in *CBA* #3), I found intriguing. Neal had a great name for this character: "The Junkman." I'm surprised he neglected to mention that monicker in his interview; perhaps he's forgotten it.

After a discussion, Neal went off to work on the first issue.

Unfortunately, after that, nothing went quite right as far as reviving the Thomas-Adams team on a new series was concerned.

I'm not 100% certain of the *order* in which the following things happened, but happen they did:

(1) At this time, as I wrote in the text page of *Amazing Adventures* #18, Neal was becoming heavily involved in such activities as designing the

In-between Conan *#37 and* Savage Sword of Conan *#14, Neal painted this watercolor-and-acrylic of Conan, Ka-Zar, and the ever-gentle Zabu for* Savage Tales *#5. Conan ©1999 Conan Properties. Ka-Zar & Zabu ©1999 Marvel Entertainment. From the collection of Roy Thomas.*

costumes and visuals for the trilogy of Chicago-based plays known collectively as *Warp*, so I tossed a reprint of The Beast's origin into *AA* #17 to buy us two months' extra time before our new series began.

(2) In the Summer of '72, I became Marvel's editor-in-chief, and found myself getting busier and busier. For one thing, I now came in to the office five days a week instead of two or three as when Neal and I were doing *X-Men* and *Avengers*. I no longer had the time or energy to receive pages late at night and script them before I came in to the office at 9:00 the next morning, as I'd often done on the earlier series.

(3) Since I felt Neal had (even if only out of well-meant enthusiasm) rather run away with the "War of the Worlds" project, I'm afraid I soon found myself feeling nearly as distant from it as I had from *X-Men* #65, which he had fully plotted. With this feeling added to my increasingly hectic schedule, Neal had barely begun the penciling when I reluctantly turned the writing of the feature over to Gerry Conway, a fact I'm sure Neal didn't like this time any more than when I'd done it on "The Inhumans." I can see his point, but I'd like to think he can see mine, as well. (By the way, it was Gerry who named the hero Killraven, which I very much liked.)

(4) In turn, Neal, after drawing the early pages of the initial issue, relinquished the penciling to his younger associate, Howard Chaykin, and withdrew from the project. I believe Gerry and Howard may have done some re-plotting of the first story at that point, but I didn't really pay all that much attention. I had faith in Gerry's handling.

(5) In November 1972, my then-wife Jean and I would separate for the first time, so perhaps events leading up to this may have been a subconscious factor in my dropping off a comic I had basically originated as a fun project for myself.

And so this fourth Thomas-Adams teaming died a-borning.

Naturally, this is not written to denigrate in any way the work that Conway, Chaykin, Marv Wolfman, Herb Trimpe, and others did on the series before Don McGregor and Craig Russell inherited it and proceeded to take it off in new and interesting directions.

What would "The War of the Worlds" have been like if Neal and I had stuck it out in tandem? The first near-dozen pages of *Amazing Adventures* #18, and that single penciled page reproduced in *CBA* #3, are the closest anyone is ever going to get to knowing.

Discarded cover sketch by Neal Adams for Savage Tales *#5. [Finished design is on upper right.] Ka-Zar & Zabu ©1999 Marvel Entertainment. Conan ©1999 Conan Properties.*

And then came *Conan the Barbarian*.

Increasingly from 1970 on, my writing at Marvel was bound up with Robert E. Howard's bronze Cimmerian, rights to whom I'd acquired for the company. *Conan* issues by late 1972 had boasted the pencils of three stellar talents—in order of appearance, Barry Smith, Gil Kane, and John Buscema.

If artists like these were interested in drawing Conan, could Neal Adams be far behind?

Matter of fact, in those days, it seemed virtually every artist in the industry wanted to take a crack at a Conan story, or at least do a pin-up for our black-&-white magazine *Savage Tales*. (This plethora of material only increased after the launching of *Savage Sword of Conan* in mid-'74.)

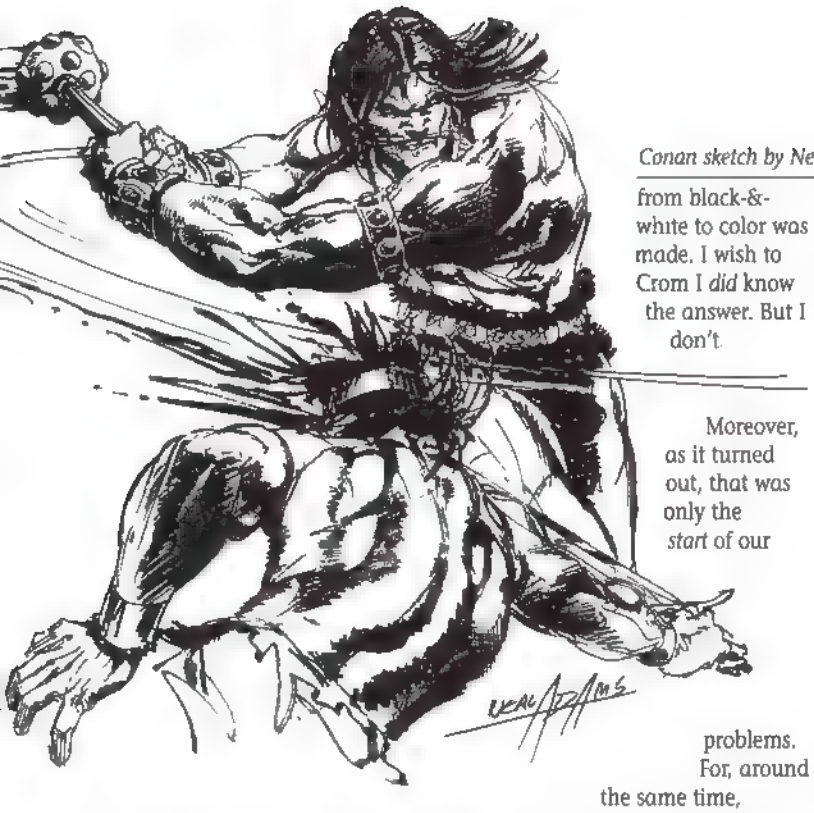
So when Neal volunteered to draw a Conan tale, I took him up on it at once. And did I have a story for him!

I had just arranged (or so I thought) for Marvel to adapt prose tales written by L. Sprague de Camp and Lin Carter for the best-selling *Conan* paperbacks. One of these was "The City of Skulls," which occurs fairly early in Conan's life, while he is in the Turanian army.

Conan and a black warrior named Juma (a de Camp-Carter creation) are escorting King Yildiz' beautiful daughter Zosara through the mountains when the three of them are captured—the only survivors of a larger Turanian party—and are carried to a lost city ruled by a fat despot named Jalung Thongpa, who naturally intends to add Zosara to his harem. After being briefly enslaved, Conan and Juma kill the evil ectopmorph, despite the intervention of a gigantic six-armed living idol. By the time Zosara is returned to Yildiz, she is pregnant by Conan.

While Marvel's attorneys were supposedly working out the details of a simple agreement with de Camp and Carter, Neal and I commenced work on an adaptation. Neal's recollection is that "The City of Skulls" was originally intended to be a 34-page black-and-white tale in *Savage Tales*. While I don't overtly recall that, he is probably right. That would account for certain aspects of the story as it was eventually published.

At some early stage, however, it suddenly seemed necessary, or at least strongly advisable, that the story go into the color *Conan the Barbarian* instead, which meant it could be no more than 19 pages long. This switch alone would have meant a bit of crowding. "City of Skulls" fit chronologically right into the period I was covering in *Conan* at that time; but since I'd have known that from the start, it doesn't answer the question of *why* the change



Conan sketch by Neal Adams. Art ©1999 Neal Adams. Conan ©1999 Conan Properties.

from black-&-white to color was made. I wish to Crom I *did* know the answer. But I don't.

Moreover, as it turned out, that was only the *start* of our problems. For, around the same time, L. Sprague de Camp belatedly decided there were still a few legal stumbling blocks to our adapting his Conan stories, and he withdrew the tenuous permission under which Neal and I had been operating. This left us with six pages of virtually unusable pencils, which end at the point that Conan, Juma, Zosara, and their captors are charged by a rhinoceros.

However, as a gesture of good will, de Camp granted us one-time permission to use Juma, who was prominent in the already-drawn pages, all we had to do was restructure the story from that point on.

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

Glenn Lord, then literary agent for the Howard estate, came to the rescue (as he so often did) by allowing us to adapt a rare vignette by REH in which a pre-royal Kull of Atlantis is an off-stage character. Its name. "The Curse of the Golden Skull."

With a few adjustments, that vignette, drawn by Neal, became the basis of a new three-page prologue to *Conan the Barbarian* #37, albeit with a non-Adams image of Kull statted into a dying wizard's eye. The already-completed six pages became Pages 4-9 of the new tale, which veers off from de Camp's when the charging rhino is attacked by a far larger reptile.

From there on we came up with a new story: Princess Zosara, daughter of Yildiz, became Princess Yolinda, *grand*-daughter of Turan's king. We even got Tom Palmer to sign on as inker again. I like our "Curse of the Golden Skull" better than de Camp and Carter's "City of Skulls" (which I eventually did adapt with Mike Vosburg and Alfredo Alcala in *Savage Sword of Conan* #60 in 1980, as a *non*-canonical comics story) But maybe I'm prejudiced.

Of course, the addition of the three-page Kull preface meant we now had only *ten pages* left to wind up a story that had barely begun. As Neal said in *CBA* #3, that meant some multi-panel pages. The tale was perhaps a bit less dissimilar to "The City of Skulls" than it should have been, but de Camp didn't complain At least Yolinda wasn't pregnant by story's end.

One of the odd highlights of *Conan* #37 was the giant slug which slithers through the later pages of the story. Neal didn't fool me when he drew the slug's "face" to resemble female genitalia The fact was never mentioned overtly between us; Neal simply smiled obliquely when I hinted I knew what he was up to. But I decided to ignore the fact and see if the Comics Code Authority would notice and object. Hey, maybe I just had a dirty mind, and what Neal had actually drawn was the artistic equivalent of a Rorschach blot: you could see in it whatever you wanted to. We'd let Code administrator Len Darvin tell us if were gonna corrupt anybody's young mind

The Code evidently preferred to see the slug's face as just a slug's face, so the issue was printed as drawn.

By a weird coincidence, *Conan* #37 came out during a paper shortage (due to a strike of paper mills, I believe) in early 1973. At that time both Marvel and DC temporarily cut back the number of comics they put out, so they wouldn't run out of paper for their more important titles. That meant more newsstand space and longer time on the racks than usual for any issue that *did* get printed, with the result that #37 became the best-selling issue of *Conan* for years before and after—with the Buscema-drawn #38 a close runner-up, before the artificial paper shortage came to a speedy close.

(Sidebar: DC's own peculiar blip resulting from the above situation was that its Simon & Kirby one-shot *Sandman* had a terrific sale, because it had no off-sale date and stayed on the stands for months, giving it lots of extra time to sell out. Seeing the sales figures, DC thought it had a super-hit on its hands and came out later with a regular *Sandman* series. It was a flop. A pity. I kinda liked that rendition of Sandman, and would eventually work him into *Infinity, Inc.* at DC.)

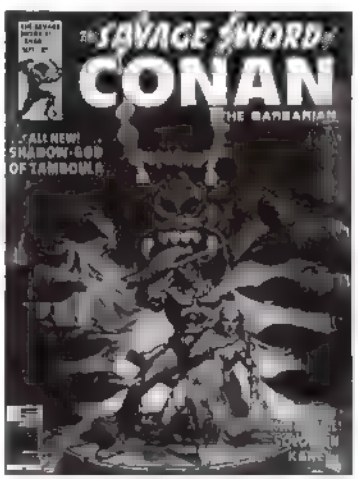
The matter of "Shadows in Zamboula," Neal's and my second Conan collaboration (and final collaboration anywhere, ever) is even more convoluted and confused. Also, I should warn the reader in advance that, once again, Neal and I disagree on key points, and there is no way to reconcile those differences—only to record them.

Though John Buscema was the regular headliner of the new *Savage Sword of Conan* magazine, Neal and I agreed that he would draw the REH story "Shadows in Zamboula," which deals with man-eating slaves in a pseudo-African setting. Probably I didn't bother to give Neal any written notes to work from; more likely we simply discussed the story briefly and he went to work. Neal would have preferred it that way.

I can basically accept Neal's statement in *CBA* #3 that, at the start, he and I had an agreement that, because of what had happened with *Conan* #37, we wouldn't schedule this new adaptation till he was finished with it. I don't *recall* making such an agreement, but I'll assume I accepted those terms or something very much like them. After all, the last thing I wanted was deadline problems on the then-fledgling *Savage Sword* black-&-white which had picked up where *Savage Tales* #1-5 had left off *Savage Sword* was only a bi-monthly when Neal began work, which seemed to bode well for our avoiding a crisis.

However, even accepting for the sake of argument (or to avoid same) that we started out with a "no-deadline" agreement sometime in 1975, I'm fairly confident that, by some point late that year (perhaps pressed by me, perhaps on his own volition), Neal committed to delivering the finished job at some particular date I felt I could count on, thus superceding any previous agreement.

I can't prove this any more than Neal can prove his recollections—and I'm dead certain both of us are being totally honest here—but without some sort of verbal commitment on Neal's part, given our prior history, I would never have run a full-page house ad in *Savage Sword* #11 stating that #12 would feature the Adams-drawn "Shadows in Zamboula." Certainly I wasn't looking for any kind of showdown.



©1999 Marvel Entertainment

When #12 came out two months later, however, it featured a story drawn by John Buscema, not Neal—and my perhaps-too-facile explanation that in the interim I had discovered another "already-penciled episode in Conan's life which by rights ought to be published first." This reads to me now as if I were trying to cover for the fact that "Zamboula" was coming in slowly, if at all.

At any rate, it was two months more till *#13* was due, so surely the story would be ready by *then*. I dared hope that, if Neal was unable to finish

the entire story on his own, he would assemble a contingent of Crusty Bunkers (the name for the loose amalgamation of young artists who worked for and with Neal on inking jobs during the 1970s) just to get the job done.

However, I clearly hadn't covered myself by getting quite enough Conan stories in the works to allow for non-delivery of "Shadows" for a second issue in a row. That was definitely a mistake of mine. But, that said: when I scripted the 39 pages of Neal's story, that took away from the time I could devote to scripting *another* one. I may not have been as over-committed as Neal tended to be, but my plate was certainly full—*too* full to squeeze in yet another Conan story twice as long as those in the color comic. I don't recall at what point I *scripted* "Shadows in Zamboula," working from Neal's rough breakdowns, but the fact remains that I couldn't script 80 pages in a time allotted for 40.

Thus when, after stalling for the full four months between #11 and #13, either "Shadows in Zamboula" had to be in *Savage Sword* #13 or the Conan story in the issue would be a reprint—

—it was a reprint.

The only reprint lead story in the 60 issues I edited of *Savage Sword*, or in fact in the entire 235 issues of the magazine.

And, to make things worse, at this point Stan, now the publisher, decided to make *Savage Sword* a *monthly* starting with #14, meaning that I had only one month, rather than two, to get something to fill it.

Neal's thumbnails to pages 27-30 of "Shadows in Zamboula" (appearing in Savage Sword of Conan #14), the artist's final collaboration with Roy Thomas. The original is letter-size. Art ©1999 Neal Adams. Conan ©1999 Conan Properties.

In the end, as the deadline for #14 loomed (as I noted in its letters section), I had seen only three or four completed pages out of the 39, plus a smattering of partly-inked pages. At that point, I felt I had to take the breakdown photostats, in various forms, and ship them halfway around the world to the Philippines to get them done on a rush basis! Tony DeZuniga and his Tribe, the Filipino equivalent of Neal's Crusty Bunkers, came through like champs under difficult circumstances with finished artwork and inking, even a bit of penciling here and there where needed—and "Shadows in Zamboula" finally appeared, just barely, in *Savage Sword* #14.

Naturally, it didn't look quite as good as if Neal had done the whole job himself, since Tony and the guys had had to guess at what Neal intended in certain minor details... but comics, like politics, is the art of the possible.

This was a relatively ignominious end to my collaborations with Neal, but, love his work though I did (and do), I felt I'd had little choice but to do what I had done. I wished then, and I wish now, that it could have been otherwise

Of course, when *Savage Sword* #14 came out, there were the inevitable firebrands who wrote in to tell us that Marvel should have published no issue at all, or another reprint, rather than have others finish Neal's work half a world away.

As far as I was concerned, these people had a point.

On top of their heads.

Since 1976 Neal and I have had no occasion to work together again. I obviously never fit into his plans for his Continuity Comics, nor has Neal exactly done a lot of work for the companies I've been writing for, whether DC, Marvel, or other.

Still, for about eight years there, off and on, Neal and I did some damn good work together.

We just don't fully agree on *how* we did it, or which of us did what.

But there's one thing on which I know we agree:

As Neal said in *CBA* #3, he did "a really, really nice Conan."

I'd like to think the writing by Robert E. Howard and me wasn't too shabby, either.

Fin

MY YEARS WITH BATMAN

AN INTERVIEW WITH SHELDON MOLDOFF

Conducted by Bill Schelly
Transcribed by Sam Gafford

As a childhood fan of the Batman stories drawn by Sheldon Moldoff (though signed by Bob Kane), I must confess to being a bit intimidated by the prospect of talking with him in some depth about those beloved comic books. I wanted to make sure there was a solid record of his contributions to the Batman "canon," and I knew that I would probably be asking him certain questions that he had not previously been asked, at least not for publication. I didn't know whether or not he would be sensitive about the nature of his relationship with Batman creator (or co-creator) Bob Kane. I needn't have worried. The moment he answered the phone, Shelly Moldoff put me completely at ease. He was willing to talk about any aspect of those years, which comprised such a large and significant part of his working life.

—Bill Schelly.

Alter Ego: *Although I want to talk mostly about your tenure on the Batman feature in the 1950s and 1960s, can you tell me a little about your first work on the strip?*
Sheldon Moldoff: I started with Bob Kane 'way back in 1939. I was his first assistant. When he and Bill Finger first created Batman, I was working on the pages and the covers. I was inking, lettering, doing the logos, and things like that. I had just gotten out of school and we were both living in the Bronx. Someone introduced me to Bob, and that's how I started working.

A/E: *Do you remember any specifics on how you met Bob Kane?*
Moldoff: He was looking for an assistant. He had just started Batman and he needed help. Someone mentioned my name and he called me up. I went over there and that was it! I started working for him.

A/E: *Had you done comics work before that?*
Moldoff: Little things. Not much. I'd done stuff for All-American Comics, and I had sold filler pages to Vincent Sullivan for National Periodicals. The filler pages I did were oddity pages. They could be about sports, they could be about movie stars, they could be about how to throw a baseball. Almost anything. I did a lot of work for Vincent Sullivan, who was the editor that took on Batman and had taken Superman earlier.

A/E: *At this time, did you work for Bob Kane outside of the DC offices?*
Moldoff: I was never working in the offices. I always worked for Bob personally.

A/E: *You worked in a home studio?*
Moldoff: Yeah, in my home in the Bronx. At that time Bob and Bill were always together in the apartment talking about Batman. We were all excited about it. We were all on the same wavelength for the characters. We all contributed to it.

A/E: *How long did your association go in the 1940s?*
Moldoff: Almost a year, probably.

A/E: *Why did you stop working for Kane?*
Moldoff: I wanted to do my own characters. I started to do Hawkman and other characters. Then I did The Black Pirate for Sheldon Mayer down at All-American Comics

A/E: *When was the next time you did Batman work?*
Moldoff: I didn't see Bob until about 10, 12 years later. Of course, I knew that he had had assistants after I'd left. In fact, I think he even had a little bit of a studio then, with a couple of artists working in it. He had such a volume of work, you know? Jerry Robinson came in right after me and stayed several years. When I met Bob again in '53, he said he needed a ghost. He wanted someone to do his Batman Would I be interested? I said, "Yeah, let's talk about it." We came to an agreement, shook hands, and that was it.

A/E: *That was when you began your heavy involvement in the '50s Batman?*
Moldoff: Right. That was in June of 1953, I think. I wasn't an assistant anymore. I was a ghost. I was *doing* the Batman. That's the difference. When you're a ghost, you do it, and you don't say anything

A/E: *After you took over the strip, did Bob have any involvement in the artwork?*
Moldoff: No. He did very little. He would look at it, and then he would fool around with a nose or a chin or something like that. I picked up the script from him and then laid out the eight or ten pages or whatever it was. I did the whole thing from beginning to end.

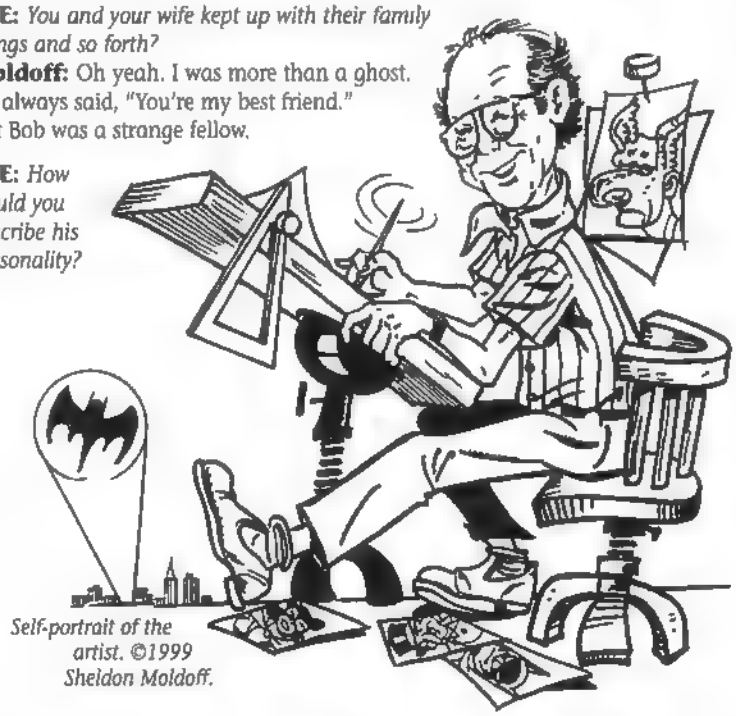
A/E: *So he acted more like, if anything, just an editor?*
Moldoff: More or less. Right, right.

A/E: *Then he would take the artwork off and that would be the last you would see of it?*
Moldoff: Yeah. I'd bring it back to his house. At that time he was living in an apartment in Riverdale, along the Hudson.

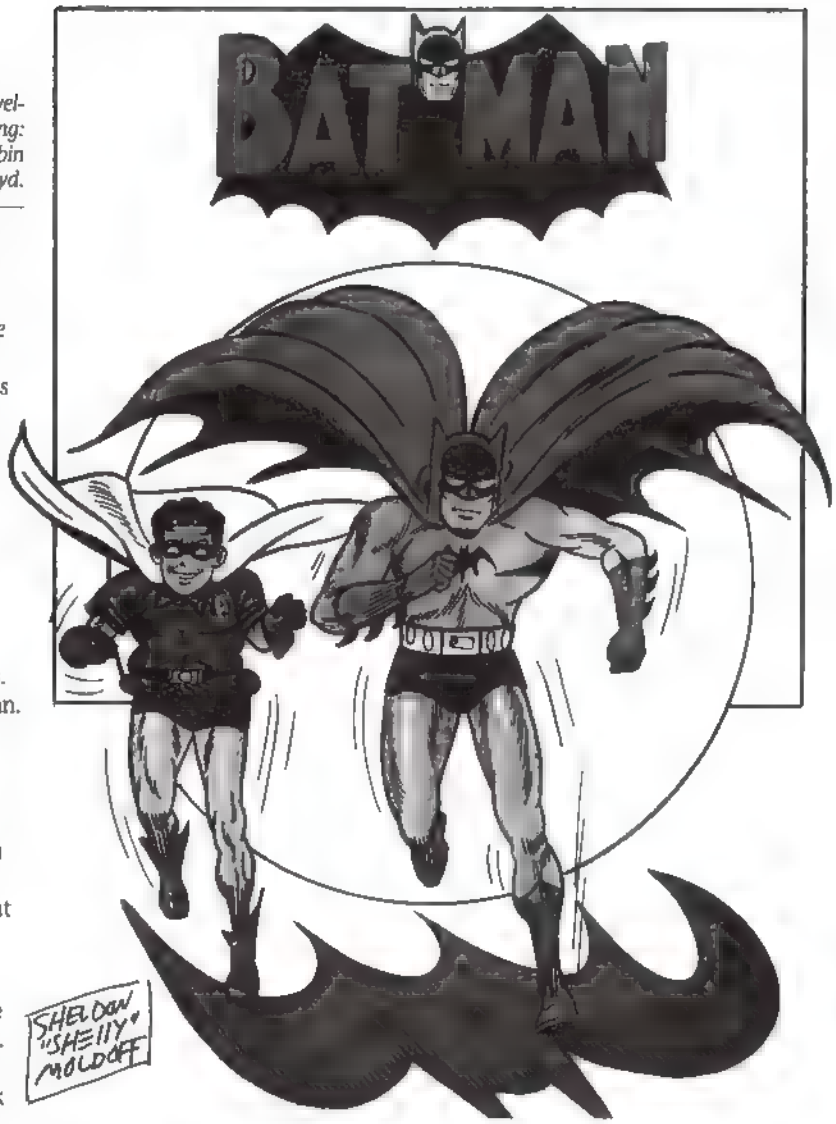
A/E: *Where did you live?*
Moldoff: I was living in Jersey, close to the Hudson. I'd go over there and deliver the artwork. As a matter of fact, he was married to a very nice girl at the time, Beverly, and we socialized a lot. We were friends. He had a little girl, Debbie. And I had a little girl also. He used to bring her over for weekends to my house. We were friends. We socialized for the next 15 years

A/E: *You and your wife kept up with their family things and so forth?*
Moldoff: Oh yeah. I was more than a ghost. He always said, "You're my best friend." But Bob was a strange fellow.

A/E: *How would you describe his personality?*



Self-portrait of the artist. ©1999 Sheldon Moldoff.



A commission piece featuring the Dynamic Duo by Sheldon Moldoff. Shelly welcomes commissions for re-creations and original drawings. Contact him by writing: Sheldon Moldoff, 3710 Inverrary Drive 1W, Lauderhill, FL 33319. Batman & Robin ©1999 DC Comics. Art courtesy of Jerry Boyd.

Moldoff: He had a very good personality. He was very likable. He was a tall, thin, good-looking guy. He was just a womanizer. That was his fault, you know.

A/E: *Some say that Bob Kane fantasized when he was young of being Bruce Wayne—a playboy of sorts.*
Moldoff: When I met him again in 1953, he was already married. I guess he took it as long as he could, and then just one woman wasn't enough, apparently. He ended up with a divorce, then moved to Sutton Place in New York City, and I continued to work for him after they were divorced.

A/E: *Your involvement in Batman was always with Kane directly?*
Moldoff: Yeah, I worked for DC through him. At the same time, I was going to National Periodicals, working for [*editors*] Jack Schiff, Murray Boltinoff, George Kashdan, and Mort Weisinger. But not on Batman

A/E: *What kind of assignments were you doing for them?*
Moldoff: I did *Mr. District Attorney*, I did *Blackhawk*. I did some Aquamans. For Mort Weisinger, I was inking a lot of Curt Swan's stuff. A lot of Superman.

A/E: *Who was inking your Batman work?*
Moldoff: Most of it was done by Charles Paris.

A/E: *Did you ever have any desire to ink it?*
Moldoff: I *did* ink some of them when they got stuck. Sometimes [*Batman editor*] Jack Schiff would say to me, "Could you do this? Could you ink this story for me?" And then he would give me this story that I had just brought in to Bob a couple of days before! [*laughs*]

A/E: *That must have been a bit odd!*
Moldoff: I never told anybody. The way I saw it at the time, they *knew* he had a ghost. As long as the work was there on time, they didn't really care. I've read recent articles where it's said it was the "worst kept secret," and everybody knew it. I don't buy that. Back in the '50s and '60s, I don't think too many people knew about it. Later on, comics historians and fans and collectors became interested in finding out who did what. They prided themselves on being able to recognize styles, and they began to identify my work on Batman. Know what I mean? I'm very grateful for fellows like Joe Desris. He would be in touch with National Periodicals, and he verified a lot of the stories that I had done because I had records of doing them, and I gave them to him. So when there were reprints of Batman, they gave me credit for them.

A/E: *I think that's wonderful!*
Moldoff: I have to thank those fans and comics historians for that.

A/E: *Why did it have to be such a deep, dark secret at the time? If DC was happy with what Kane was delivering to them, why did it have to be kept a secret?*
Moldoff: This is what Bob wanted! He always said that he did the artwork, you know? In fact, I've read interviews with him, and he always insisted that he did most of the work himself. I think there was an article in *Comic Book Marketplace* about a little giveaway that he did for an airline. He described to the interviewer how he worked up this little airline giveaway (I think it was American Airlines). Well, he *didn't* do any work on it. *I* did it! In his mind, you were just an extension of his thoughts or his fingers. You know what I'm saying? He was not about to give anybody credit for anything. As a matter of fact, I did his *Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse*

A/E: *I didn't know that!*
Moldoff: I did all the stories, and I did all the storyboards.

A/E: *Did you get frustrated by this? Of course, you were getting other work.*
Moldoff: I was very busy. Busy with my own work, and busy with Bob's stuff. He would say, "Shelly, you've got an annuity. Batman will go on forever." So, although it wasn't the principal part of my income, it was a check that I knew was good and steady and always coming in. I worked for many other publishers. I worked for Fawcett for a number of years. Many of the books would have cycles. They'd sell and you'd be hot for a while, and then two years later you'd get cancelled. It was a frustrating field for a lot of artists and writers because you didn't know what was going to sell or how long it'd be selling.

A/E: *So working as Bob Kane's ghost was kind of a trade-off?*
Moldoff: Batman was a steady thing. I always felt secure that at least I'd always have some kind of check coming in That's what I felt. I don't have any regrets about it. I would have liked to have had my name up there. I would have liked him to give me a mention or credit. That would have been nice. But Bob wasn't that type of person. You live with it, that's all.

A/E: *Were you aware of who was writing the scripts?*
Moldoff: Oh, yeah. I knew most of the writers. The scripts were always signed: Arnold Drake, Bill Finger... there were quite a few writers. I knew Arnold Drake was brought personally by Bob Kane to Jack Schiff, and he ended up writing quite a few of the stories over the years. Not only Batman, you know.

A/E: *To get a little bit specific here, I noticed that one of the earliest covers you did on* Detective Comics *was the introduction of Batwoman. Did you design her costume?*
Moldoff: Yeah. Just like Mr. Freeze or [*the second*] Clayface. Any villain or character that came into the story was usually brought in by the writer. I would create the visual part of it. So when people say to me, "You created the Batwoman" or "You created Bat-Mite," I would have to say, "It called for the character in the script."

A/E: *But you visualized it.*
Moldoff: I created the visual I did the costume. I decided what the Batwoman and many other characters looked like

Moldoff illustration of Batwoman, Bat Mite, and Bat Girl. Characters ©1999 DC Comics. Art courtesy of Mike McPeek and Jerry Boyd.

A/E: *Let me ask you a specific question that might seem silly. When I was a boy and reading those comics, I was always fascinated with the way Batwoman's bust was darkened. Later I wondered if it was darkened because of the Comics Code, or was an attempt to de-emphasize her breasts. Was there any thought about that at all?*
Moldoff: You had to be careful. You didn't want it to be too sexy. By the '50s, they'd clamped down on sexy women like Phantom Lady and Sheena.

A/E: *Would you agree that Batwoman's darkened bust was an attempt to downplay that part of her anatomy?*
Moldoff: No, I wouldn't say so. That was just the character design, in keeping with the character where black should be prominent.

A/E: *Were the covers in this period done before or after the interior stories?*
Moldoff: Usually the editor waited for the story to be done. When he got the pencils and looked at the different stories (there might be two or three stories in a magazine), he would pick out an idea and say, "Use Bathound in this." He would make a suggestion, and then Bob would tell me, "Jack Schiff said put a big barn in the backyard, make it spooky," or something like that, because it was part of the story. So he would tell me if Schiff had any ideas and then I would pencil it. I did a great many of the covers.

A/E: *I noticed that the first cover featuring Bat-Mite was penciled by Curt Swan. But the initial story was by you. You first visualized Bat-Mite, and then later on Curt Swan looked at the artwork and drew the cover?*
Moldoff: Yes.

A/E: *I notice that Curt Swan and Stan Kaye did a series of covers for* Detective Comics *through most of 1958 and '59. But the stories were always done first?*
Moldoff: Yeah.

A/E: *Did you also visualize Bathound and [the first] Batgirl?*
Moldoff: That's right.

A/E: *When we were setting up this interview, you mentioned that some of the Batman covers have held up and become very popular. What are the most often requested covers that fans want you to re-create today?*
Moldoff: I would say it ranges. Definitely one of them is "Robin Dies at Dawn!" I've re-created covers featuring Clayface, The Penguin, a couple of different Joker variations. I did The Zebra-Man for somebody. Plus I did quite a few with aliens on them. Everybody has a different taste.

A/E: *This was the period when there were so many aliens threatening Batman and Robin, also many strange transformations, like the giant Batman, the underwater Batman....*
Moldoff: Some of the stories were pretty weird! Jack Schiff was trying to find out what was going to sell. It was neither very scientific nor very outer space. It was just... trying something *different.*

A/E: *Your style at the time seemed so charming, and a little cartoony, but very suited to the kind of fantasy elements that were in the comic books.*
Moldoff: I felt that with that style, a little cartoony, it's easier to accept an alien from outer space. It makes an interesting, nice story. Today they have these weird aliens from outer space, and they're drawn very realistically and very savagely I don't buy it. To me, it doesn't ring true

A/E: *I find that cartoony style very appealing.*
Moldoff: To me, that's a "comic book," you know what I mean? The stories today are not "comic book." Fellows like Neal Adams, who are tremendous artists and work from photographs so they get very realistic, are not drawing in a style that (to me) is the best for comic books. Of course, we had just as many good illustrators in the 1940s and '50s, but they confined their talents more or less to record albums or pulp magazines or slick magazine illustration, not the comic books.

A/E: *There were Hal Foster and Alex Raymond, but they were in comic strips.*
Moldoff: Their strips were in the newspaper. You'll notice they never made it big in comic books. They were strictly newspaper strips. Although they had their run in the comic books, they were never very popular there.

A/E: *Your style on Batman reminds me of certain syndicated strips (other than the ones that were highly illustrative). It's simplified, almost codified. The way you would draw faces was kind of repetitive, the same lines each time.*
Moldoff: I know what you mean. I was a great admirer of newspaper strips. I think every artist and probably every writer would have loved to do a newspaper strip, because the newspaper comic artists made a lot of money. And when you study the strips, whether it was *Li'l Abner, Mutt & Jeff, Barney Google,* or whatever, you find that they were done very cleanly and very beautifully. They kept their characters always identifiable. Whether they were a side view, rear view, whatever, it was always the same. When you get into a very realistic style like that of Neal Adams and some of the other fellows today, you lose that. It's too hard to keep. It just can't be done!

A/E: *I learned to draw trying to draw faces just like Robin in the Sheldon Moldoff style. There were always the same lines and always the same approach to the faces, especially. I liked that!*
Moldoff: Yeah, 'cause when you looked at it, you'd say, "There's Robin, or there's Bruce Wayne," and they looked the same. Now every artist on the strips draws the characters looking different.

A/E: *Let's talk a little about "Robin Dies at Dawn!" which is being discussed in a separate article in this same issue of* Alter Ego. *In the prequel where Robin meets a character called Ant-Man, it seems Dick Grayson is no longer portrayed as 13 or 14. He's attending a school dance, and he looks more like a 16-year-old. Was there a deliberate drift toward aging him a little bit during your tenure?*
Moldoff: I don't think we *really* tried to make him a bit older. It could have been that, if he was going to a prom, he had to look like he belonged there

A/E: *So that was maybe because Dick was trying to act grown-up?*
Moldoff: Yeah, yeah.

A/E: *"Robin Dies at Dawn!" is my personal favorite from your period on Batman. Both the script, by Bill Finger, and the art by you and Charles Paris, are superb. Did you realize when it was handed to you that this was something special?*
Moldoff: No. Just another script. [*laughs*] That's all! If we knew what was going to become popular, we could make a million bucks! Nobody knows what the public is going to like or accept or what will become a favorite.

A/E: *Looking at it closely now, with the benefit of hindsight, there are certain elements in that story that are exceptional. There's a panel where a grieving*

Batman is standing in shadow, and he looks more like the dark, eerie Batman of the early 1940s. It seems as though you were at least somewhat aware that this was a little bit of a different type of story.
Moldoff: There's no question that the artist always tries to portray the feeling that's in the story. You can do more with some stories, if you get the opportunity and you "feel" it. It just works out better sometimes. That's all in the mood that you try to create in telling a story.

A/E: *There's a terrific mood in that story. You did a lot of alien landscapes, but for some reason that one seems very moody and interesting. It's very fitting that it's a part of a dream that Batman's having. Did you see the coloring Carl Gafford did on the reprint of the strip in* The Greatest Batman Stories Ever Told*?*
Moldoff: No.

A/E: *In that reprint Gafford re-colored it with darker hues. Not very, very dark, but more so than the original comic book, which was mostly done in pastels. It is very striking. It really emphasizes the drama in your artwork.*
Moldoff: Today coloring is so much more advanced than it used to be. When the colorist got "Robin Dies at Dawn!" he did it as quickly and efficiently as he could. He didn't say, "I'm gonna make a masterpiece out of this." He just did what he felt was a professional-looking job. Nobody knew in advance that this would be here forever. If we did, we might have taken more time with some of these things, and who knows? Maybe they wouldn't have been as popular if we were more painstaking. I don't know. At the time, I didn't really think about it.

A/E: *Did you have any favorite type of story? Did you like to draw a particular villain or was it that whatever came in, you were happy to draw?*
Moldoff: It didn't make any difference. I enjoyed them all.

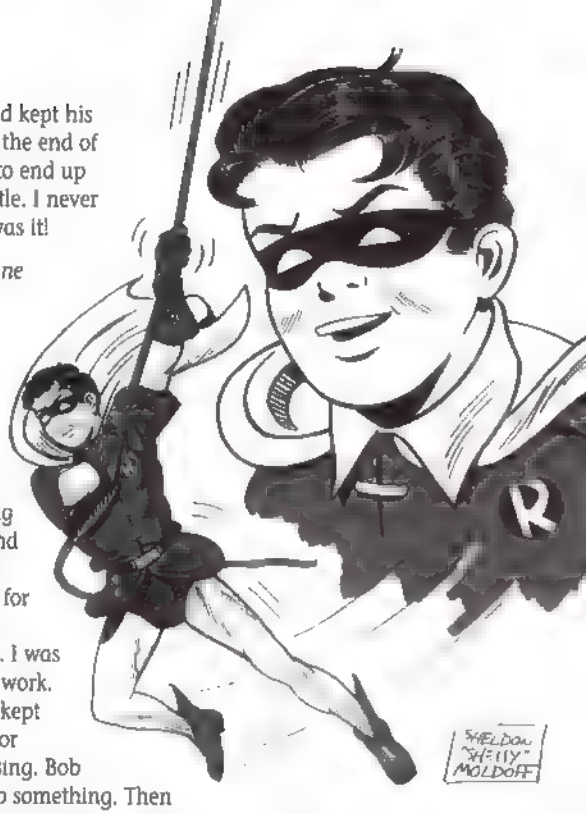
A/E: *How did things change when Jack Schiff was replaced by Julius Schwartz as editor of* Batman *and* Detective Comics*? How did you approach your work differently under the "New Look"?*
Moldoff: We tried to make it a little straighter... but not too straight! Bob didn't want it to look like Flash Gordon or anything like that.

A/E: *Julie was requesting a little more realistic style?*
Moldoff: Yeah. They were getting into the more realistic era, you know? So I adjusted my artwork to fit the times. I stayed on the feature until 1967.

A/E: *Let's see, 1953 to 1967—that's 14 years!*
Moldoff: Yeah, almost 15 years.

This page: Commission work by Sheldon Moldoff of Batwoman & Robin. Courtesy of Mike McPeek and Jerry Boyd. ©1999 DC Comics.

A/E: *That's a very long time on a comic book feature. Is there anything you would like to say about it in summary? How do you feel now that you look back on working on Batman, one of the most popular characters of all time?*
Moldoff: I was always glad to be associated with it. I think it's a great strip! It's one of the cornerstones of the comic book industry, along with Superman. No regrets. I would have liked Bob to have publicly recognized my contribution to the feature a little bit... and kept his word. But suddenly, at the end of that long association, to end up with nothing hurt a little. I never saw him again! That was it!



A/E: *You never saw Kane again?*
Moldoff: Never

A/E: *Can you tell us the circumstances of the split?*
Moldoff: Let's go back to about 1964, or a little later. I was doing the Batman for Bob, and he had also started the Sunday and daily strip for the *Newark Star Ledger*, which I was also doing. I was loaded to the *gills* with work. And on top of that, he kept coming up with ideas for games and merchandising. Bob was always thinking up something. Then he would give it to me and say, "Work this up into a presentation. I'm going to bring this around and see if I can sell a card game with the Batman and Joker." Things like that. I was always doing extra stuff. I was really working my head off. It was too much.

Finally I gave up. I said, "I just can't handle it all, Bob." He said, "I'm working on a new contract [*with DC*]. You're going to get a *lot* of money when this thing is settled. Just try to keep going." But I just couldn't keep it all up, so finally he said that someone else would do the newspaper strip, and I would just concentrate on the magazine. Bob owed me a lot of money, because he said he couldn't afford to pay me for all the extra work, but that I would get it eventually. Then one day he called me and said, "I've signed my contract." And I said, "That's great! When do I start collecting?" He replied, "The only problem is that the office is going to do all the drawing from now on, and I have nothing to do with it. They're going to handle it." I said, "Where does that leave me?" He said, "I feel terrible, but there won't be any work." That was the end of it! It ended just like that! It was all over.

A/E: *That must have been quite a shock!*
Moldoff: *It was!* I said, "How could you do that? All those promises...?" He just said, "Well, I feel terrible about it." That was the end. It just stopped.

A/E: *You never worked on anything Batman-related again for DC?*
Moldoff: No, I never did.

A/E: *With the way it ended, does it make it hard for you to look back at that whole period?*
Moldoff: No, it doesn't bother me any more. It really doesn't. But I definitely don't think I was treated fairly. People said, "You should have had a lawyer. You should have had a contract." Well, I didn't, and that's it. As my wife says, "Never look back. It served a purpose and now you're getting fan appreciation. You go to a convention, and they come over to shake your hand, take a picture with you, and tell you how they grew up on your stuff, and how they loved it. That's your reward." I could tell you so many stories, a lot of them *hilarious*, about Bob Kane and his mother and his family, because I spent so much time with them. I'm going to work on a book in which I recount a lot of these things.

A/E: *I hope you will. I'm sure it would be very enlightening... and very funny. Thank you for talking with us, Shelly.*
Moldoff: It was a pleasure.

SHELDON MOLDOFF *is currently a regular on the comics convention circuit, appearing at many major shows across the USA each year. An early upcoming issue of* Alter Ego*, Volume 3, will feature an interview with Moldoff on his Golden Age work on Hawkman, The Black Pirate, Moon Girl,* et al.

Fin.

BATMAN'S BAD TRIP

AN IN-DEPTH, PERSONAL LOOK AT "ROBIN DIES AT DAWN"

by Bill Schelly

Introduction

"Alien Feud on Earth!"... "The Zebra Batman!"... "The Bizarre Polka-Dot Man!" These are *not* stories that inspire accolades from today's Batman fans, for they were emblematic of the era many comics fans consider the weakest in his history.

Perhaps due to the controversy that had led to the establishment of the Comics Code Authority in 1955, National (now DC) had decreed that Batman's adventures were to be geared toward a younger set of readers than before.

Another factor, it's said, was the launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957. With the Soviets seemingly getting the jump on the U.S. in the space race, interest in science among America's youth was on the upswing. This, coupled with the UFO craze of the '50s and a plethora of movies about invading aliens and weird monsters, influenced Batman editor Jack Schiff. Many of the stories were given a science-fictional slant, albeit an exceedingly juvenile one.

The writers weren't at fault. Men like Alvin Schwartz, Dave Wood, Ed Herron, and Bill Finger had proven themselves over the years to be among the best wordsmiths in the industry

Nor can the fault be laid at the door of Sheldon Moldoff Bob Kane's chief ghost on Batman at the time. "Shelly" had made his name at National in the '40s with exquisitely-rendered artwork on the Golden Age Hawkman. While it's true that his pencils on Batman from 1953-67 were even more "cartoony" than those of Dick Sprang or other Kane ghosts, Moldoff was more than capable of effectively rendering good material. The problem was the type of stories he was required to illustrate

Even amid the repetitive tales of fantastic alien menaces and bizarre physical transformations in the pre-"New Look" days of the late '50s and early '60s, there were occasional examples of genuine charm and, yes, inventiveness. The introduction of the "Batman family" (Bathound, Batwoman, Bat-Mite, and Batgirl) added variety and color to this moribund period. The return of The Penguin was a nice touch, and several of the Joker stories were even better. ("The Joker Jury" comes to mind.) Still, these hardly qualify as classics.

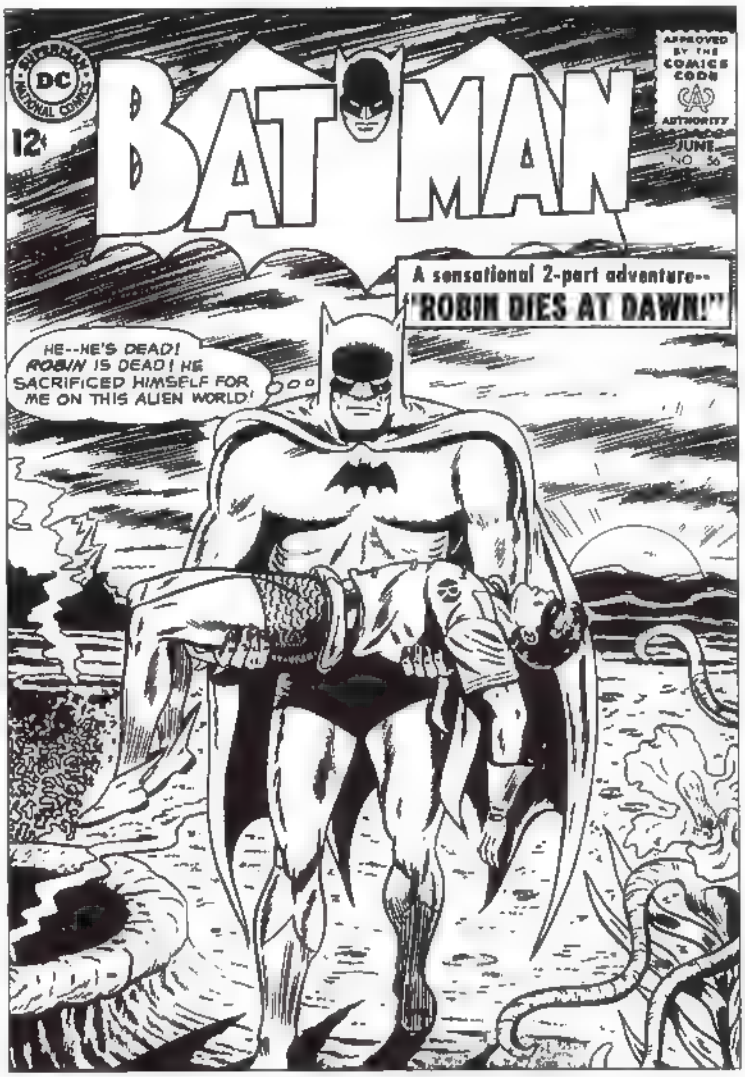
For a comic book story to be truly memorable and carry genuine emotional impact, it must deal with *fundamental* elements of the protagonist's psyche. The average super-hero story, enjoyable though it may be, is generally as forgettable as yesterday's news. Rarely does a tale come along that turns its primary focus on what makes our hero tick—a story that delineates the hero with a profundity that both changes his life and the way we look at him. When this happens, it's worth taking a closer look.

"Robin Dies at Dawn!" from *Batman* #156 (June 1963) is such a story.

This emotional mini-epic, written by Batman's co-creator Bill Finger, penciled by Sheldon Moldoff, and inked by Charles Paris, can hold its own against much that came before in the Dynamic Duo's career, and against much that would follow....

I. The Cover

The cover to *Batman* #156 is a shocker, especially for 1963. It would not be an exaggeration to say that it is one of the most memorable ever to appear on a comic book. Although, in his interview in this issue of *A/E*, Moldoff says most covers during this period were designed after the interior


BATMAN
12¢
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
JUNE
A sensational 2-part adventure--
"ROBIN DIES AT DAWN!"
HE--HE'S DEAD! ROBIN IS DEAD! HE SACRIFICED HIMSELF FOR ME ON THIS ALIEN WORLD!

© 1999 DC Comics.

stories were completed, it would seem logical that in this instance the cover and book-length saga (including the prologue) were all conceived of a piece. (Moreover, the cover pose does not appear on the inside.)

The cover falls into the category of "holding the dead hero" covers, which can be found throughout the history of comics. In the 1940s, an example would be the cover of *Catman Comics* #31 (June 1946) by L. B. Cole, with the hero holding the limp figure of his teenage girl-partner Kitten.

The covers of *Batman* and *Detective Comics* tended to emphasize the indominatability of the heroes, rather than scenes of operatic tragedy. If there is an original referent in the Batman chronicles for the cover of *Batman* #156, it is a panel in #5, in 1941, in which the Caped Crusader holds a battered Robin in his arms in a similar position. (In recent years, of course, there have been *many* such covers.)

Batman holding Robin in a cradling position is *appropriate*, since he has nurtured and protected the youth—and *ironic*, since his custody and care have led to this awful outcome. The fact that the death occurs at dawn, a time of renewal and hope, further underlines this irony. A devastated

Batman (with tears streaming down his face, in a day when this sort of naked emotion was very rare in comics) thinks: "He—he's dead! Robin is dead! He sacrificed himself for me on this alien world!"

SLOWLY HIS GREAT ARMS STRAIGHTEN. SMALL VEINS STAND OUT ON HIS FEATURES. MUSCLES CORD IN THE THROAT. HIS EYES BECOME FIRES. HIS MOUTH A KNIFE-EDGED LINE--
FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE BATMAN KNOWS RAGE, BLEAK, GRIM RAGE. WOE TO ALL CRIMINALS, FOR NOW, THE BATMAN HAS BECOME A TERRIBLE FIGURE OF VENGEANCE!

From Batman #5, 1941 ©1999 DC Comics.

From this simple thought balloon, we can glean a fair amount about the story within: Batman's repeat of the reference to Robin being dead drives the point home, making us feel its finality; we learn his death came as a conscious act of sacrifice; and its occurrence on an "alien world" tells us that the emotional dynamic is liable to be between just those two. This last serves to provide a unique focus.

I submit that Batman views the *whole world* outside his relationship with Dick Grayson (on Earth, in Gotham City) as an "alien world." A by-product of the murder of Bruce Wayne's parents is his separation from the world of normal psychological equilibrium.

II. The Prologue

Although "Robin Dies at Dawn!" is billed as a two-part story, the issue gives us first an eight-page prologue featuring the Boy Wonder's team-up with a new crime-fighting partner in Batman's absence: The Ant-Man.

(For the record, Marvel's Ant-Man had debuted in *Tales to Astonish* #34 [Sept. 1962]. The use of a character with the same name by DC nine months later seems mere coincidence, and demonstrates how little attention it paid to its competition in those days.)

On its own, "The Secret of Ant-Man" is unremarkable. The Ant-Man turns out to be a criminal thought to have been murdered by Robin's quarry, Al Welles. Still, it does have some points of interest:

First, Robin acts completely without his mentor. Batman appears only in panel one, to explain he is going away on a "top secret mission." Robin had rarely carried a story alone since his late-'40s solo series in *Star-Spangled Comics*. The reader—even Robin—fully expects Batman to turn up, even to have been Ant-Man all along. But the story ends with nary a Batman in sight.

Second, the Robin of this story is a far cry from the "laughing young daredevil" of earlier days. The way Dick Grayson holds his date Edie at a school dance indicates the maturity of a young man of high school age. Indeed, he appears to be about 16.

Third, this tale demonstrates how successful have been Batman's efforts in bringing up the orphaned Dick Grayson. Bruce feels he can depend on him to handle trouble in Gotham City while he is gone, with only a mild word of caution.

THAT NIGHT, AS HAPPY YOUNG PEOPLE CROWD THE GYM FLOOR.
OH, DICK I LEFT MY SCARF ON THE TERRACE WHEN WE WERE TALKING OUT THERE BEFORE
I'LL GET IT FOR YOU, EDIE, AFTER THIS DANCE

©1999 DC Comics.

In the course of the story, Robin learns Ant-Man was shrunk when he fell "under the pipe that carried waste chemicals from [Prof. Hanson's] experiments into the water." Apparently, in those days prior to raised environmental consciousness, the fact that a "freak chemical mixture" is being poured directly into the river isn't worthy of comment!

This prologue was not included when "Robin Dies at Dawn!" was reprinted in *The Greatest Batman Stories Ever Told* in 1988, probably because, though it has echoes in the main story, it is hardly essential. More difficult to understand is why DC neglected to reproduce the issue's *cover* in that book.

THE FRIENDSHIP OF BATMAN AND ROBIN IS ONE THAT HAS STOOD STRAIGHTEST AS A ROCK! TO BATMAN, ROBIN IS LIKE HIS OWN SON -- AND ROBIN WOULD BRAVE ANY DANGER TO KEEP BATMAN FROM HARM! NOW THIS FRIENDSHIP BECOMES THE PIVOTAL POINT OF A STRANGE ADVENTURE IN A FANTASTIC WORLD -- A WORLD WHERE DOOM WAITS, AND WHERE BATMAN IS CONFRONTED BY THE TERRIBLE TRUTH THAT:
BATMAN AND ROBIN
ROBIN DIES AT DAWN
CHAPTER 1
IT'S COMING AFTER US! RUN, ROBIN-- RUN!
THE STONE IDOL IS ALIVE!
BOB KANE

©1999 DC Comics

The reprint, incidentally, was re-colored by Carl Gafford, and it's a vast improvement—a *revelation*, in fact Darker, more dramatic tones are used throughout, enhancing the emotional content of the story, as well as its psychological underpinnings. *Batman* #156 itself features pastels—pinks, yellows, light green—which emphasize the "cartoony" aspects of the art. With the bluish hues of nighttime applied by Gafford to the alien landscape, it's apparent Moldoff's work can carry far greater dramatic impact than was initially apparent.

"WHERE IS BATMAN?" ROBIN WONDERS! AND THE FAMED CRIME-FIGHTER SOON WONDERS, TOO-- FOR HIS WHEREABOUTS IS A MYSTERY TO HIMSELF!
ALL BATMAN KNOWS IS THAT HE IS BEING SWEPT ALONG BY SWIRLING LIGHTS THROUGH VAST REACHES OF SPACE...

©1999 DC Comics

III. "Robin Dies at Dawn"—Chapter 1

The opening panel of the main story links it to the prologue, as Robin wonders, "Where is Batman?"

The Caped Crusader's whereabouts are a mystery even to himself; see the caption of the accompanying illustration, in which Batman appears to be shooting through outer space in a glowing cocoon. With the bubbles and "spin-lines," it's almost as if Batman is intoxicated or drugged. (More on this later.) The reader, as well as Batman, is thrown into the adventure with no chance to get his bearings.

Our confusion increases when Batman concludes he's been transported

THEN BATMAN IS TOUCHED BY A TINY FEAR -- THE INSTINCTIVE FEAR OF ANY MAN WHO IS ISOLATED AND WEAPONLESS -- AND CONFRONTED BY THE UNKNOWN!
IT'S NOT KNOWING THAT'S SO DISQUIETING! AND SOMEHOW I SENSE TERRIBLE DANGER -- WAITING! I--I'VE NEVER FELT SO ALONE IN ALL MY LIFE...
OOOH
2
©1999 DC Comics.

to "an alien planet," because the usually in-control Batman has no idea where he is, or why. Also, his utility belt is gone. As he strides across the mysterious landscape, his shadow long and ominous before him, he thinks, "It's *not knowing* that's so disquieting! I—I've never felt so *alone* in all my life...."

Suddenly, the tendrils of a huge alien plant grab him. Instinctively he calls out to Robin—and from nearby ruins the Boy Wonder comes running. Having been likewise mysteriously transported to the planet, he saves Batman.

As they watch the sunrise, the mood is one of impending disaster and great dread. The fact that the reader knows from the cover that "Robin dies at dawn" only adds to our anxiety.

Nevertheless, no amount of foreshadowing can prepare us for the shock when Robin perishes by attracting the wrath of a great stone idol that comes to life in a harrowing two-page sequence.

While the story itself doesn't make the sacrificial aspect of Robin's death all that clear, Batman holds his young ward's lifeless body, crying out his pain. A tableau of Batman standing unspeaking over a mound of stones that comprises Robin's grave has considerable impact.

THE DAWN SUN RISES, LOOKING DOWN AT A MAN STUNNED BY THE SHOCK OF TERRIBLE CATASTROPHE!
ROBIN SACRIFICED HIMSELF FOR ME HE DIED SO I COULD LIVE! OH, ROBIN... ROBIN...
LATER, ON THIS HOSTILE, ALIEN WORLD -- A MOUND OF STONES BECOMES ROBIN'S CRYPT -- ROBIN'S FINAL RESTING PLACE!
©1999 DC Comics.

Later, when the distraught Batman encounters an alien beast, he doesn't want to live, feeling it's his fault that Robin died. This is one of the most intense sequences in the Batman canon up to this point, and goes to the very heart of the relationship between the man and boy who are so much like father and son.

Abruptly, in the very next panel, the reader learns Batman is merely in a scientific "test chamber," simulating conditions an astronaut might face if he found himself alone on another planet. Batman has actually been on Earth the whole time. Robin's demise occurred only in his mind.

Though no mention of drugs is made, it seems strongly suggested by all the talk about "space medicine" and hallucinations. We now know LSD experiments were conducted by U.S. government agencies in the 1950s. It's as if this story were Bill Finger's interpretation of a "bad trip" for Batman.

When Batman comments on how afraid he was of being alone, the Army doctor conducting the secret experiment replies. "One of man's most primitive fears is loneliness! When a man is isolated too long, the mind plays strange tricks."

While the doctor watches the Dynamic Duo leave, he wonders whether there will be any after-effects of the experiment on Batman's psyche: "Even a Batman can succumb to stress and shock." Thus we are set up for the narrative to shift gears....

IV. "Robin Dies at Dawn"—Chapter 2

Chapter Two is not as frightening or dramatic as Chapter One, but it's no less disturbing, as we are involved in Batman dealing with his own mental illness.

Almost at once, in a pair of clashes with a gang of hoodlums wearing gorilla costumes (!), Batman hallucinates first that a construction crane is the stone idol of his nightmares—later that he's facing the alien beast he fought there. He surrenders to despair ("Let it come! I don't want to live! It's my fault Robin died!"), and is saved both times by his young partner. Batman decides he must retire from crime-fighting, for his "mental blackouts" endanger Robin's life. Dick tearfully accepts his decision.

But when Robin goes out on his own and is promptly captured by the Gorilla Gang, a weakened and troubled Bruce Wayne must don the Batman costume once again.

And dawn approaches!

The caption of the first panel above is unusually tough for 1963. It is followed by the evocative shot of Batman in dramatic shadow on the rooftops, uncertain of his abilities.

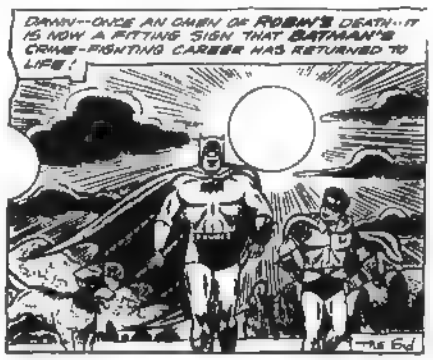
Dawn.

Batman finds Robin tied to a large balloon about to be sent aloft by the Gorilla Gang: "Sunrise—and Robin's gonna rise until he's outa this world!" An ironic parallel, of course, to Robin's earlier "death" on an "alien world." The whole story has led up to this crucial juncture, and it is appropriately suspenseful.

There is a moment of panic, as the balloon's mooring ropes trail "like tentacles around Batman's shoulders"—and we wonder if he's blacking out again. Then he hurls an axe, and the punctured balloon drifts back to Earth with Robin. Batman explains that "the reality of the situation was so terrible, it shocked me right back to normal!"

In the end, all is set right.

Or is it? The reader has seen a side of Batman he has rarely glimpsed before: an interior vulnerability, based on his very human psyche, which at its core is strongly linked to his feelings of responsibility and love for Robin. We have discovered that Batman could go on without Robin only with the greatest difficulty, and at a tremendous personal cost, perhaps even his sanity.



©1999 DC Comics.

In fact, "Robin Dies at Dawn!" may be the first tale in the Batman chronicles that delves into the detective's mental health. While it doesn't directly deal with questions of his actual sanity (which have been an issue in more recent years), it does take us inside his head and heart to see what makes him tick, and shows in graphic terms that Batman's mental stability is not to be taken completely for granted. (Certainly the unnamed Army doctor is, by action and implication, more of a psychologist or psychiatrist than a physician.)

Batman is human, and fallible, and in fact seems to be grappling with demons that may be accentuated by the responsibility of his role as crime-fighter and surrogate father. Is it too much to extrapolate that this core of anxiety finds its roots in the childhood trauma of seeing his parents murdered? Thus, we are not dealing with the underpinnings of Everyman here, but with the unique psychological terrain of a troubled individual.

The story is laced with strong, complex emotions. For example, when Dick weeps at Bruce's announcement that he must retire from crime-fighting, it is with the understanding that his mentor's love for him has partially caused this dilemma.

The lesson, if there is one, is that a true hero can triumph over his fears when it counts the most. And that even the most stalwart hero fears being alone. This is ambitious subject matter indeed, especially in this unremarkable era in the history of Batman.

Finally, look again at the artwork by the Moldoff-Paris team. In particular, notice the unusually heavy use of blacks, the stark shadows, the imaginative imagery. The rooftops, the alien landscapes, the anguished faces of the players—all are rendered simply yet effectively.

The writer and the artists more than achieved what they set out to do. Should we expect more?

INTERVIEW WITH FRED FINGER

A CONVERSATION WITH THE LATE SON OF WRITER BILL FINGER

©1999 David Anthony Kraft

Conducted by Dwight Jon Zimmerman

*[**NOTE:** Through the 1980s and into the 1990s, my longtime friend and colleague David Anthony Kraft published a fine magazine called* Comics Interview, *which was made up of just what the name implies—interviews with people connected with comic books (and occasionally strips). He has kindly given* Alter Ego *permission to reprint some of these. And since Fred Finger, the son of Batman's co-creator Bill Finger, himself passed away fairly recently, it seemed the best way this issue of A/E could pay tribute to his father in this special Batman-related issue was to re-present the following interview, conducted by Dwight Zimmerman for* Comics Interview *#31 in 1986.*

Not having ever met Fred Finger, I—and Alter Ego*—cannot personally vouch for precisely what happened between him and DC Comics a decade and a half ago. This interview is presented as an historical document—one man's view of his father, and of his relationship to the early days of an industry to which he was very important. It is safe to say that Bill Finger's name is far better known among Batman and comics fans today than it was in the 1940s and '50s.*

—Roy Thomas.*]*

Bill Finger. From Eclipse's 1992 card set Famous Comic Book Creators. *© Eclipse.*

ORIGINAL *CI* INTRODUCTION BY DWIGHT ZIMMERMAN:

If Bob Kane represents the pinnacle of comic book fame and success, then Bill Finger must represent its nadir. Though the co-creator of Batman, Bill never achieved anything close to the acclaim and fortune Kane did. Ultimately, Bill died penniless, broken, and virtually forgotten by an industry he was so instrumental in building.

Why did this happen? How could the man who according to Kane created such definitive villains as The Joker, Two-Face, The Penguin, and Catwoman, and such distinctive stories which detail the warping and abuse of the human spirit, allow himself to come to such an end?

It is a measure of how forgotten and ignored Bill Finger has been that when I worked on his article for the DC tribute [*magazine*], *Fifty Who Made DC Great*, he proved to be the most difficult to find anything substantial about—and, as for a photo, not even a snapshot existed in DC's files.

It was only after the deadline had long passed that I got my breakthrough. An address was passed to me—that of Bill's son, Fred Finger, who fortunately lived in New York City. It may have been too late to get Fred to talk about his father for that project, but there was still time for a photo. Fred graciously agreed to do what he could to help, though he could provide only three small snapshots. One was a beach scene (ultimately used), the second was too poorly exposed for publication purposes—and the third showed Bill holding, and surrounded by, comics he had written, but was mutilated beyond use. I quickly realized that even if Fred's words about his father couldn't be included in the DC project, a forum still existed—*Comics Interview*. Fred thought over my suggestion of an interview about his father, agreed to it, and an appointment was made to meet him at his loft for dinner.

What a dinner it was! Fred is an incredibly talented self-taught professional chef who created a masterpiece of a chicken dinner with all the fixings. And the conversation was equal to the meal. Fred's depth of intelligence, wit, and self-awareness were not only a treat; they were a reminder of how rare such commodities are, and how truly lucky one is when they are all found in one person.

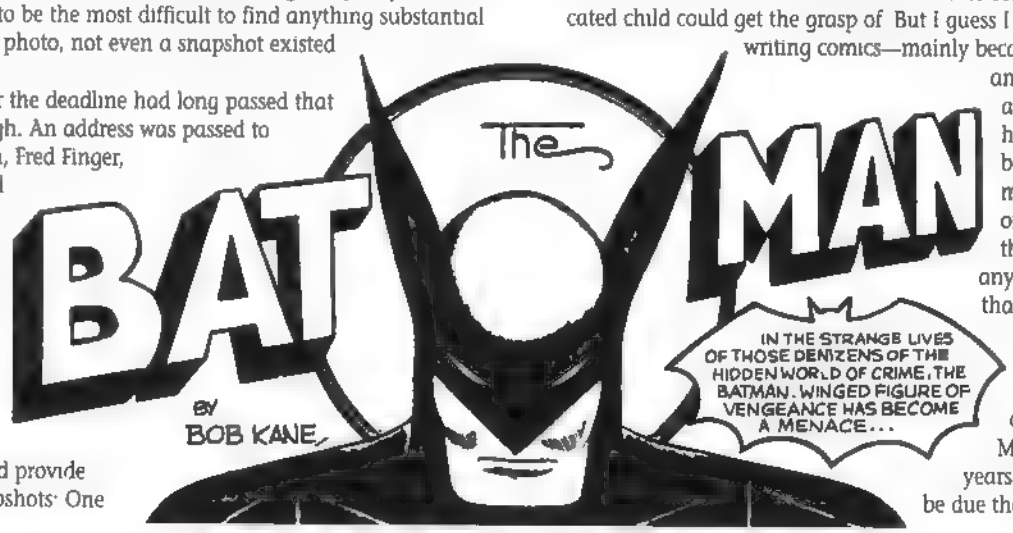
This interview is about Bill Finger, as told by his son. It is a fascinating and often incredible tale. And it is also not a pretty one.

DJZ: *When were you first aware of what your father was doing?*

Finger: Writing Comics? Ever since I can remember.

DJZ: *What was your first memory about that?*

Finger: Probably when I was under four. Even though they say you're not supposed to remember too much before the age of four, I do have some memories about it. The main problem is that my parents separated when I was four and a half, so I wasn't too sure what it was all about. But I would stay with Bill on the weekends and he would be up all night, and I'd hear the typewriter going all night, and then in the morning there'd be a stack of white originals and yellow carbons. And when I got to be an age where I could read, he'd ask me to read them so that he could get an idea of what a child's response to a story would be—you know, if it made sense from a kid's-eye view. And if I found them too confusing, I would try and work it out with him so that it would come down to something that a fairly sophisticated child could get the grasp of. But I guess I always knew that he was writing comics—mainly because there were always stacks and sacks of comic books around the house, so I never had a want for buying a comic book. I didn't really know too much about what was going on at National in those days—the business side of it all or anything like that—I just knew that my father was crazy because he would be typing until three or four o'clock in the morning all the time in order to get something in by Monday... which, in subsequent years, I found out was supposed to be due the *previous* Monday. But that


The
BAT MAN
BY
BOB KANE
IN THE STRANGE LIVES OF THOSE DENIZENS OF THE HIDDEN WORLD OF CRIME, THE BATMAN, WINGED FIGURE OF VENGEANCE HAS BECOME A MENACE...

Art by Bob Kane from Detective Comics *#30. ©1999 DC Comics.*

was my father—he was a great procrastinator

DJZ: *What was your father's method of working?*
Finger: Brainstorming. He would come back from the office with a premise for a story and he had an incredible collection of articles and this and that from magazines and books and stuff that he had been collecting for a long time.

DJZ: *Yeah, I heard he had quite a morgue.*
Finger: God, yeah. I mean, there was a file on birds... anything to do with birds—nicknames for birds, bird calls, how bird calls are done—anything. Or card tricks—anything that could relate to major villains—Batman villains, because mainly that was what he was involved in. And he'd come back from the office and say, all right, they want a story about The Penguin doing something weird with a bird show and some exotic birds doing this, that, and the next thing. And then he'd go through his files and then we'd go Saturday to the Museum of Natural History and walk around the museum for hours. And me, I was just interested in going and looking at dinosaurs and having a good time and looking at the rocks and minerals and the stuff that interested me. Meanwhile, we'd end up in the bird hall and Bill would be walking around very silently looking at all the bird exhibits and meditating on things that he wanted to use as elements in the story. And then we'd go back to the house after going to the museum and movies and dinner and all the things that divorced fathers do with their kids—and lo and behold, there'd be a story the next day—clackety, clackety, clack all night long. And that's basically how he did it. Or he'd call up a couple of friends of his and they'd come over and they'd sit around and have a few drinks and sit and talk—and maybe a couple artists would come over and they'd do some quick sketches and play around with ideas and then there'd be a story.

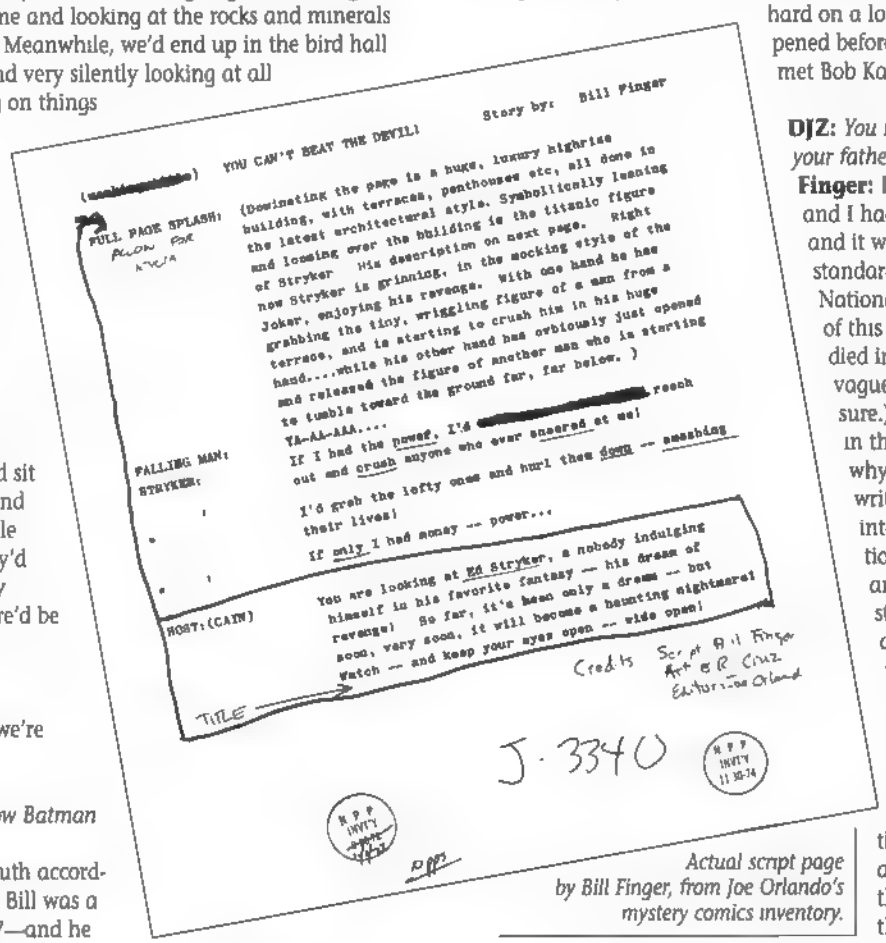
DJZ: *When were you born?*
Finger: I was born in 1948, so we're talking early '50s.

DJZ: *Did your father tell how how Batman was created?*
Finger: Yeah. Now this is the truth according to my mother, Portia Finger. Bill was a young kid, whenever it was—'37—and he met Bob Kane at a cocktail party in the Bronx—and he was a shoe salesman—and Bob was a fledgling artist/comic book writer, whatever he was doing in those days. And he and Bill were talking about science fiction and things because they were both into reading science fiction a lot. And Bill had wanted to be an artist He was a so-so sculptor, not-so-hot draftsman, but he was very creative from what I understand and they just started chatting and brainstorming ideas, and Bob was working on a character, Batman, and he really didn't have too much of a concept yet of what he wanted him to look like or any kind of history for his human being. He just wanted to come up with a character.

DJZ: *Did the character have a name at the time?*
Finger: I think it was "The Bat" originally. And there was a problem with that because there had been a movie made with Bela Lugosi called *The Bat*, and people already had this connotation of evil—and they didn't want that. They wanted the idea of the Batman to come across as a hero, sort of a left-handed hero—which he was for many years, initially. He did not work closely with the police the first couple of years—he was a vigilante. So Bob had this idea, sort of a rough concept, and Bill had a lot of ideas about what he wanted to do with the story—he thought, "Oh, great, I'll write a story—I've never done this before." And they came up with the initial Batman story. And after that they had to figure out who this character was—and *why* he is.

DJZ: *How about the costume?*
Finger: The costume originally for Batman was a very stiff costume, one that would not work well at all. The cape wasn't a cape, it was wings—you can't get through the door with stiff wings. And the logistics of it was that if this man were on a rope, swinging, the wind would carry him in the wrong direction if the wings were stiff. The colors were different; he had a full-face mask instead of the cowl. It was diamond-shaped. He looked more like a cat than he did a bat.

DJZ: *Did you ever see the illustration or the description?*
Finger: Some time ago I saw one of the original drawings in a book—and I can't remember what book—but it was very different from what Batman developed into by the time he reached his classic phase in the '40s. It's really hard on a lot of this because this all happened before I was born. You know, I never met Bob Kane.


YOU CAN'T BEAT THE DEVIL!
Story by: Bill Finger
FULL PAGE SPLASH:
(Dominating the page is a huge, luxury highrise building, with terraces, penthouses etc, all done in the latest architectural style. Symbolically leaning and looming over the building is the titanic figure of Stryker His description on next page. Right now Stryker is grinning, in the mocking style of the Joker, enjoying his revenge. With one hand he has grabbing the tiny, wriggling figure of a man from a terrace, and is starting to crush him in his huge hand....while his other hand has orbiously just opened and released the figure of another man who is starting to tumble toward the ground far, far below.)
FALLING MAN: YA-AA-AAA....
STRYKER: If I had the power, I'd [redacted] reach out and crush anyone who ever sneered at me!
I'd grab the lofty ones and hurl them down -- smashing their lives!
If only I had money -- power...
HOST:(CAIN) You are looking at Ed Stryker, a nobody indulging himself in his favorite fantasy -- his dream of revenge! So far, it's been only a dream -- but soon, very soon, it will become a haunting nightmare! Watch -- and keep your eyes open -- wide open!
Credits Script Bill Finger Art & R. Cruz Editor Joe Orlando
TITLE
J. 3340
Actual script page by Bill Finger, from Joe Orlando's mystery comics inventory.

DJZ: *You mentioned the fact that you had your father's files for a while.*
Finger: I did. I had them when Bill died and I had to clean out his apartment, and it was huge—it was enough to fill a standard file cabinet And I called National and I said, "Look, I've got all of this stuff here." (This was when Bill died in '73 or '74—I'm getting a little vague in my old age, too. I'm not too sure.) And no one was interested up in the office and I couldn't imagine why. I figured there must be new writers up there who would be interested in all of this information about developing characters and why things in Batman stories happened the way they did. No interest at all. And it wasn't like I was trying to sell it to them or anything. I just felt that someone should pick up the option on these things because they were interesting. I was sitting there re-reading them when I was a kid. I'd sit and go through his files because there was interesting stuff in there.

DJZ: *Did your father say exactly what he contributed to the Batman in the older version?*
Finger: He developed the costume, he developed the history of Batman—why he turned to fighting crime; the death of Bruce Wayne's parents; how could somebody do this and not have to work—so they had to make him into a very wealthy man; all of the gimmicks that you think about with Batman—the Batarang, the Batcave, the Batmobile, the Bat Signal—all this stuff came out of my father's little fertile imagination.

DJZ: *How about the villains?*
Finger: The villains. The Joker springs to mind as Batman's greatest rival. He and Bob were trying to come up with the idea of a really offbeat villain, and the character for The Joker was developed, but he still didn't have a face. And out in Coney Island there used to be Luna Park and the Steeple Chase, and the Steeple Chase had this huge face painted over the entrance. And they were out at Coney Island, just ya-ya-ing around, and Bill said, "That's the face, that's the face!"—and that's how The Joker's face came.

Marshall Rogers' 1992 pencil rendition of Batman and his arch-nemesis, The Joker. Courtesy of Scott Bloom. Art © Marshall Rogers. Characters © 1999 DC Comics.

DJZ: *What you just said is very different from that version in which, basically, Jerry Robinson maintains that he helped create The Joker—that The Joker's face actually came out of a playing card, a joker...*
Finger: That's possible, too. I've looked at a lot of card decks in my time and I have never seen a face like that Joker on any playing card. Maybe they made different playing cards in the '40s, but Tally-hos still look the same now as they did when I was a kid, and I'm sure they looked the same twenty years before that.

DJZ: *Your father used only Tally-hos?*
Finger: Well, I don't know—Tally-hos, Bikes, whatever. Basically, those are all trademarked jokers and have been copyrighted since the '20s, because I know that American playing cards have not changed, basically. But the face on the Steeple Chase was very distinctive—it was a totally maniacal face and it was a white-faced evil clown. It did not have a smile, it had a leer.

DJZ: *What about the Conrad Veidt aspect?*
Finger: I think the Conrad Veidt aspect was how The Joker physically looked. The *long* arms, the *long* hands, the very *long* face, and kind of the sadness of the character at the same time, because The Joker really, when you come down to it, is a very sad character. I mean, here he is, permanently scarred, no way of reversing the effects, and it kind of made him a little crazy, I would think. But I've seen some Conrad Veidt films and I could see where the mannerisms would come from there. The face came from Steeple Chase.

DJZ: *How about other villains?*
Finger: The Penguin was an idea that my mother and father picked up, when they were courting. At that time my mother was living in Albany, and Bill would come up for the weekends and spend the weekends with her up there and they'd go for long walks and he'd say, "I've got an idea for a new story and I need a new character and these are his twists that I'm trying to work into the character." And they were walking along the road and basically just brainstorming ideas and she said, "Well, why don't you make him seem like a demented English butler? And give him an affection for umbrellas. And think of all the things you can do with umbrellas—like swords, canes, and in that range." "Oh, very good." "And why don't you call him Penguin because he looks like a little, fat penguin in a black-&-white butler suit—and if that's going to be his name, why shouldn't he have a thing about birds?" And so that is how that happened—the gospel according to my mother. And I have a tendency to believe her on things like that—and so it came to be. Two-Face was an idea that came out of Jekyll and Hyde. A lot of the characters just kind of developed from classical sources. But the most distinctive ones were definitely unreproduceable anywhere else; they only came from somebody's imagination. Some characters were picked up and then they were dropped for years and then came back because all of a sudden the time was right to bring them back—Two-Face being one of them who has been in and out of comics every ten years. All of a sudden he's not a sympathetic and then he is a sympathetic and then... He's one of my favorite characters, actually.

DJZ: *Any particular reason why?*
Finger: Because he's in everybody. Everybody has that quality about them. The original Two-Face, because of what he was—being a district attorney who got splashed with acid and all that and went over to the other side—he's a sympathetic character. He's someone who was caused by a trauma. And I think that made him a very interesting character, that you could do more with him. Whereas someone who is *just* evil like The Penguin—The Penguin has no reason for being evil at all· he was just a wicked little man The Joker you could feel sympathy for—but he was a criminal before he even started and so, poor man, but he was wicked to start with. Two-Face was not a wicked person to start with; that's why of all the villains I kind of like him the most—something happened to make him go over. Everybody else was already on the other side. Sort of like Luthor in the Superman comics—he did not start out as an evil genius, he just started out as a genius. And he had his traumas and all of a sudden he changed.

DJZ: *How about Robin?*
Finger: Robin, I don't really know how Robin came. Robin I think was from Jerry Robinson. From every article that I've ever read about the formation of Robin, he was Jerry's concept.

DJZ: *Kane takes credit for Robin*
Finger: Does he really? I don't think Bob Kane did very many Robin stories as far as illustrating them. At that point Jerry was doing most of the artwork.

DJZ: *Jerry was ghosting for Kane?*

Finger: Yeah. Bob Kane had a number of people who worked under him as inkers and delineators and all of the other things that go into making an illustration. And Bob basically had final say but he was not doing much after a certain point. I mean, you can tell just by looking at the drawing styles. My friend Ian, who's a comic book fanatic at age 13, can tell Dick Sprang's work, Jerry Robinson's work, all of the other people who worked for him. And he can tell Kane's work, too, because there's a totally different feeling. Jerry's work is much more flowing and illustrative; Bob's was always very stiff, very comic book-looking. Jerry's actually were good illustrations, and more active. There was a flow in a panel that he would do, whereas each panel that Bob Kane would do was entirely unto itself—good, bad, or indifferent, they were individual things, whereas Jerry's was a page concept; you could see the development of action panel to panel. It was like stop-frame photography.

DJZ: *How about Batgirl?*
Finger: Batwoman.

DJZ: *Actually, I think she was called Batgirl.*
Finger: No, Batgirl was her sidekick, her niece.

DJZ: *Well, what about the Catwoman?*
Finger: The Catwoman was another one of those strange little ideas that Bill had about love-hate relationships. Where the Catwoman was *really* in love with Batman and Batman was *really* in love with the Catwoman but they were on such total opposite sides that it could not happen. But in the first few stories in which the Catwoman appeared, they were romantically linked—both of them being society people who knew each other out of costume.

Sheldon Moldoff commission drawing of Two-Face and the Dynamic Duo. Art ©1999 Sheldon Moldoff. Characters ©1999 DC Comics, Inc.

DJZ: *Did they know each other's secret identities?*
Finger: No, they never knew each other's secret identities, but they both knew each other and frequented the same social circles. Batman knew the Catwoman's identity but he never let on. But she never figured out that he was Bruce Wayne.

DJZ: *Do you have any of your father's stories* [i.e., scripts]*?*
Finger: I have nothing at all at this point. Because of the way that National paid their writers in the old days, Bill never made any money writing comics. The stories were very, very cheap, and because of his personal quirks about always being late on deadlines, they gave him fewer comics the longer he wrote for them. And when I was a kid, he had stacks and stacks of oldies, golden oldies that I would love to have. But he had to sell them off in order to survive. You know, I thought when I was cleaning out his apartment that I would find things. That's why I went through all of the files, to see if there was anything left. Nothing, nothing at all. The only things that he had were late model comics and there wasn't much of a market for those; you could sell those for 50¢ a bundle. Which was unfortunate, because I really wanted to have those for myself, but there was just nothing left. There's something very bitter in me about that and it's a hard feeling to touch on. I just got such a feeling of coldness when I called them up to say that Bill had died. I talked to Carmine Infantino—he was the editor at the time, and he was very sorry to hear that Bill had died but he didn't really have much else to offer me in the way of help in giving the files to someone who could use them. And they were basically very cold to me. Another editor was very cold to me when I talked to him on the phone. I don't like going up there.

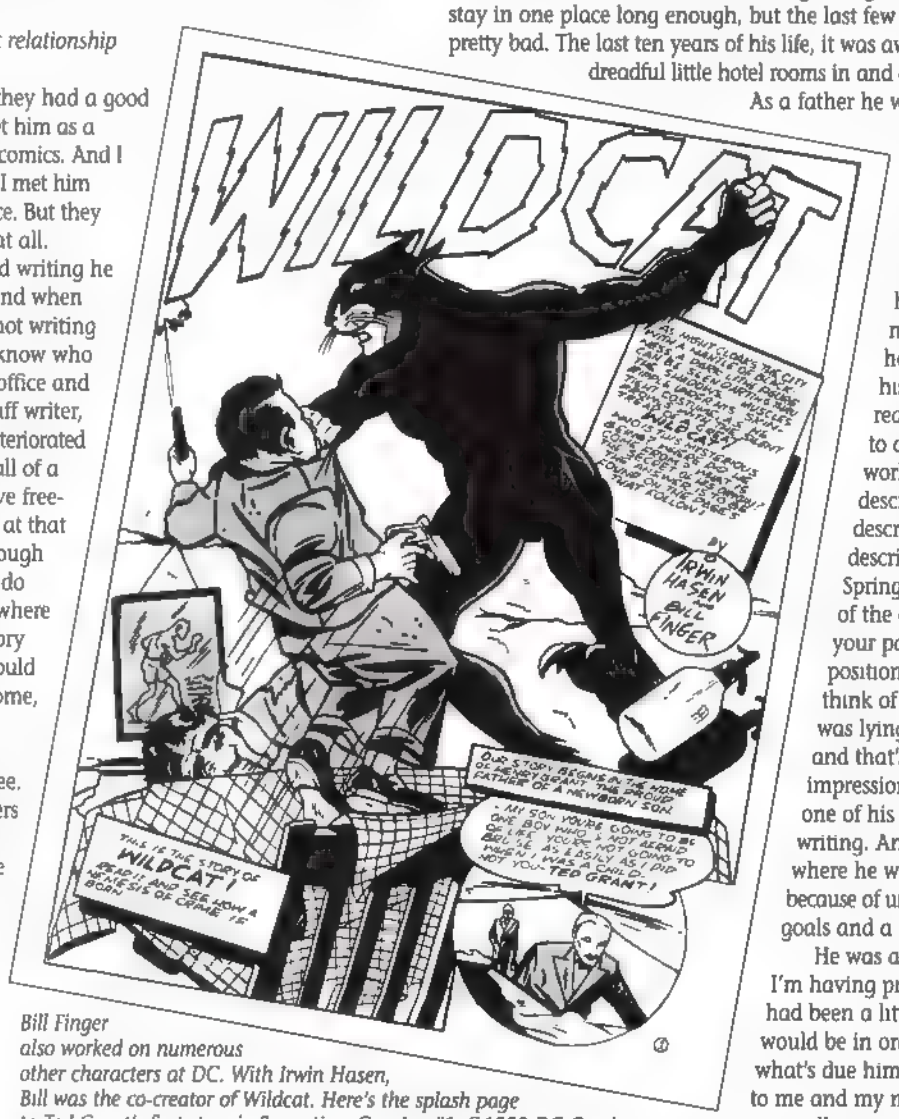
DJZ: *When did you go there?*
Finger: In October or November of '84, with my friend Ian, who had never been to National Comics. I said, "Great, let's go up to Lexington Avenue," and he said, "You don't even know where they are anymore." I said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "They're not at 575 Lex, they're at 666 Fifth Avenue." And I said, "Oh, the sign of the beast, huh?" And we went up there and I walked into the offices and I said, "Hi, I'm Fred Finger." An editor came out and said, "Hi. What are you doing here?" And I said, "Well, basically, I'm here as a tourist. I've got a friend here who is very interested in comic books, he's got a marvelous collection, and he wanted to come up and see the place, and I've never been to your new offices—and gee, it's a real nice office." And he said, "Yeah, while you're here, I have some checks for you." And I said, "Really? What for?" And he said, "Because we reprinted a lot of your father's stories in the last ten years." And I said, "Oh, really? Well, here's my address. If you can't find them now, no problem, send them on. How much are you paying?" 'Cause I figure, what could they pay? It was $100 a story in those days. And it's $20 a page, is what they're paying on royalties now—and your average comic book [*story*] is 13 pages.

DJZ: *So you went over to Ian's place and went through his files?*
Finger: Yeah, because he's a comic book collector. He's got a lot of reissued books. And we started going through them. Some of them have writer's credits in them, some of them don't, but I know my father's style of writing. There were things about those stories that you could always tell. And I came up with a list of at least twenty stories and I called them up and I said, "Hi. I don't know how your research department is doing on this, but I've come up with a good 20 stories that were Bill's that had been reprinted." And they said, "Well, we're only paying on issues from 1976 on." And I said, "No, that's not what you told me, actually You told me that you were paying on issues going back to 1974, because you reissued a number of stories that year as a memorial to Bill. And you're going to tell me you're not going to pay me the royalties on those stories?" And this editor said, "Well, no. I was mistaken. We're not paying on the 60¢ issues, only on the dollar issues." And I said, "Okay, fine—these are the 60¢ issues, these are the dollar issues. The 60¢ issues have his name in them. Where are the checks?" And he said, "Well, you have to do all your own research." And I don't have the time to do this. They've got the books up there; they have a research department, and I don't want to have to go to a lawyer—I really don't. It's expensive, it's time-consuming, it makes for even more bitter feelings than are already there. And basically, the last time I was up there I was thrown out of the office—which I felt was rather rude handling.

DJZ: *When was that?*
Finger: A couple of months ago. Oh, I got in and talked to the editor and he said, "I don't have anything for you, so why don't you leave? And what *are* you doing here?" And I don't think it's right, I really don't. I don't have anything from my father at all at this point—the least of all my kind of inheritance. I certainly am not looking for money—and I was not looking for money when I went up there. All I was doing was going up there on a lark—I just wanted to see if it was still left. And then to be told that there are royalties coming to me—and then never another word—and then to be basically thrown out of an office is not a nice feeling. And I do know that they're planning on releasing a very serious-minded Batman movie within the next year or so, and I don't want to go through what the Superman creators went through in order to get some kind of financial settlement when the Superman movie came out. Because if I have to pursue it that far, I

will—I can make a lot of trouble in that respect. Because if I do hire an attorney, an attorney would have a research department go out and go through all the books that I have no time to do right now and I could call Jerry Robinson; I've got his number. I could call a number of people if they're still alive at this point to corroborate me on the fact that Bill never did receive the credit that was due him as writer in his lifetime, and now that he's no longer around to try to fight for his rights—I mean, he's just being taken for granted. I mean, they could put up all the great laudatory paragraphs that they want in books and stuff, but it doesn't cover the fact that he was there and that he never received anything for his creation.

DJZ: *What was your father's work relationship with Bob Kane?*
Finger: Not so good. I figured if they had a good work relationship I would have met him as a child when Bill was very active in comics. And I never met Bob Kane. [*pause*] I *did*—I met him once at the old National office. Once. But they did not have a good relationship at all. Basically because when Bill started writing he was ghost-writing for Bob Kane, and when National found out that Bob was not writing his own material they wanted to know who it was and brought Bill up to the office and they put him on as a freelance staff writer, and I think that the relationship deteriorated after that point because Bill, now all of a sudden, had a great deal of creative freedom and he blossomed as a writer at that point and he didn't need to go through Kane for everything he wanted to do with a story. So it got to the point where Bob would say, "I'd like to do a story about such and such," and Bill would say, "Okay, great idea." He'd go home, work on the script, bring it in, and that would be about the extent of their relationship as far as I can see. I knew more of the other staff writers and artists at that time in my life than anybody else—so I figured he was working more closely with them. I don't think that Bob really had that much to do with the development of Batman as a person after a certain point and certainly not by the time I came along. Basically, he would just oversee things and put his signature on things, and that was it. I read an interview in some fanzine with Jerry Robinson which basically said the same thing about Jerry's work with Bob—that once Jerry became chief illustrator for Batman he never saw Bob except to get a personal stamp of approval—that was about it. Meanwhile, Mr. Kane sat back and collected a lot of money for his name going on everything.


WILDCAT
BY IRWIN HASEN AND BILL FINGER
THIS IS THE STORY OF WILDCAT! READ IT AND SEE HOW A NEMESIS OF CRIME IS BORN!
OUR STORY BEGINS IN THE HOME OF HENRY GRANT, THE PROUD FATHER OF A NEWBORN SON!
"MY SON, YOU'RE GOING TO BE ONE BOY WHO WON'T BE AFRAID OF LIFE. YOU'RE NOT AFRAID, ARE YOU? NO, I KNOW YOU'RE NOT! AS I WAS WHEN I WAS A CHILD! AS I DID NOT YOU—TED GRANT!"

Bill Finger also worked on numerous other characters at DC. With Irwin Hasen, Bill was the co-creator of Wildcat. Here's the splash page to Ted Grant's first story in Sensation Comics *#1. ©1999 DC Comics.*

DJZ: *Did you know that he's the creative consultant on the* Batman *movie?*
Finger: Yes. Which is all right, I'm sure he deserves that—but were my father still alive, would he be in that position? No. See, there lies a lot of problems. When they did the *Batman* TV series, Bill was offered the position of going out to the Coast and doing creative consultation on the initial plot and the first season. And he didn't pick up on it. Which was his loss—for whatever reason, he was beating himself up. Had he done so, I think that things would have been very different at this point, but he didn't, and "what ifs" don't make it.

DJZ: *What was your father like as a man, his personality?*
Finger: Personality? Bill was a quiet man, very dreamy, very personal in his life. Not too many close friends—his writing habits would preclude a lot of friendships because he basically would lock himself away for days at a time. He had a series of very stormy romances with a couple of women as I was growing up. I always get the feeling in retrospect that my father was a man who never grew up, and by the time he realized it he was having his third heart attack and it was pretty close to the end. He was never very goal-oriented; he was a very hand-to-mouth kind of person. His creativity got in the way of his pragmatism. He was never on time with a script; he was never on time with his child-support payments, if he paid them at all. He never set roots anywhere. I can remember in the first few years after my parents separated that Bill was constantly moving. And for a while he would settle down for a couple of years, and then he'd be off and moving again. And I know a lot of it had to do with economics, because he wasn't making enough money in order to be able to stay in one place long enough, but the last few years of his life it was getting pretty bad. The last ten years of his life, it was awful. He was down to living in dreadful little hotel rooms in and around town, very depressing. As a father he was as good as he could be. He turned me on to a lot of wonderful things.

DJZ: *Was he very supportive of you?*
Finger: When he was there he was supportive, but he was not there enough. And I think he had enough problems with his own maleness that I never really had a strong male image to deal with He was in a fantasy world, he really was. It's hard to describe—no, it's *not* hard to describe. *I'm* having a hard time describing it. I went through a Life Spring Course last summer, and one of the operations in it is to picture your parents in their most typical positions, and the only way I could think of my father most of the time was lying on his back, dreaming—and that's the strongest, most vivid impression. Either that or fighting with one of his girlfriends when he wasn't writing. And he really got into a state where he was in a perpetual dream, because of unfulfilled hopes and unquested goals and a lot of that—he was weak. He was a weak man. Which is why I'm having problems now, because if he had been a little more assertive, everything would be in order and I'd be able to get what's due him; at least it would be coming to me and my mother at this point. But he was really a good guy and he had so much to give—and he really didn't know how to do it. He never got the skills of being a good communicator. Which is why he was a good writer, because on his personal levels he was terrible. But he could put it all on a page and it was great. Every weekend of my childhood we spent at the Museum of Natural History; even when I was too young to legally get in there, he would sneak me in. Because they used to have regulations about how old you could be to get into the Planetarium and he snuck me in there when I was four years old. At that time you weren't allowed in there if you were under six. He sneaked me in there under his raincoat. I had the biggest collection of dinosaurs and anything related to that when I was a kid, and I had a very good support system in that I wanted to be an artist and I wanted to be involved in creating. So that kind of support I got. But where I didn't get any support was in interpersonal dealings, and that was hard, that was very hard, because it made me a very private person caught up in my fantasy worlds and lots of "what ifs," and you can't deal with the world that way. Nobody cares about your "what if"; they only care about the "now" and "where is it." So it showed in the way he dealt with things.

He was a procrastinator *par excellence*. Which is thoroughly recorded in any interview about Bill, or any article—he was never on time with anything.

And he always had an excuse—good, bad, or indifferent, there was always an excuse for it. I guess that's the major sad thing about him, that he just never got it together. But I loved him, very dearly. I love him more now, in retrospect, than I did for a long time, because I guess now that I'm older I can see things a little bit more clearly. I can see a lot of him in me and I know when I'm treading what lines. He liked to play golf—something that I cannot do. He loved to type—something that I cannot do. Every term paper that I ever had to turn in, he always typed for me.

DJZ: *Did he tell you his feelings about the comic books?*
Finger: He hated comics. He wrote for them for many years. He liked the writing, but he had a kind of negative pride about writing comic books. And he wrote other things, as well. He would write scripts for radio, he would write articles on handyman stuff, because he liked doing carpentry and he was a good carpenter, too. He wrote dreadful movie scripts, including one that comes up every now and again as a late movie or an afternoon movie: *The Green Slime*. Did you ever see that? About these people that are in outer space and there's this little germ that turns into this big green slime thing that if it touches you gives you an electric shock and burns you—nasty stuff. And he wrote for *Hawaiian Eye* and *77 Sunset Strip* and *The Roaring Twenties* and all those [*TV*] things that came out of Warner Brothers in the early '60s.

DJZ: *So he did manage to break out of the comic book field?*
Finger: He did, he did. And for a long time he stopped writing comic books entirely. He was for a while writing training films for the U.S. Army—this was in the mid-'60s. By that point I was kind of pissed off at him anyway, and I said, "You know, I liked it better when you were writing comics because at least I could believe in you, 'cause here you are writing stuff *you* don't even believe in." So that didn't last too much longer anyway. How do you feel when you're an anti-war person and you know your father is a pacifist and he's writing training films for commandos to go to Vietnam? It just doesn't gel too well. He had a writing partner for a while when they were doing TV scripts and movies and such. That's another friend of his that got lost along the way.

DJZ: *What did you like most about your father's writing?*
Finger: His sense of fun about it. When Bill wrote a story, it was a *comic* book story. There was fun involved in it. The puns did not become as meaningless as they did when Batman changed in the '60s after the TV show, where it became a cartoony comic book. These were comic books that had a sense of humor in addition to being about crime fighters and all that. There was something funny about them, the dialogue, the situations, the over-sized milk bottles falling over and actually being full of milk, the giant electric train sets that you could ride on—these kinds of things I enjoyed—they were something different than was going on in other comics then. You could read a *Superman* book and from a certain period they would all be the same story—it's aliens coming to Earth to do this; or it's all Luthor doing that; or it's combining three or four villains in a story, you know? But Bill's comics had a sense of humor about city living. They were very urban, they were very much a New York view of things in the '40s—all that glitters is not gold, but how deep do you have to scratch before you find the real sh*t?

DJZ: *When I was interviewing Bob Kane, he actually said that your father was one of the great unsung heroes of Batman and started giving Bill a fair amount of credit for the creation of Batman.*
Finger: That's good. I'm glad to hear that. Maybe they'll be so kind as to put a memorial plaque on the movie. Oh, I'm sure at this point, because there's been so much more exposure about Bill and about comic book writing and everything, that he can't deny it any more—because for years Bob Kane was just basically blowing his own horn and saying, "It was all mine; everything was mine," and it's not true.

DJZ: *How did your father react to that?*
Finger: I think it made him have even less self-esteem than he already had, basically, because he could never get any further

DJZ: *He didn't stand up?*
Finger: No, my father had a very weak spine. As I said, there was very little goal orientation; maybe it's growing up during the Depression. I'm sure that that would leave *me* kind of grasping at things if I grew up in the '30s. Bill was born in 1914, so by the time 1933 rolled around, Roosevelt started putting into operation all the things that helped the nation get out of the Depression. By that point I'm sure he was pretty whipped around. Basically, I don't think that Bill ever thought that comics would get to the point where they have now. Maybe in the last few years of his life he began to see that he really did throw away a lot instead of pursuing it, but by that point he was so beaten. He went back to writing comics the last few years he was alive, and his stories didn't have the same kind of flair or pizzazz about them at all. Batman had changed so much as a character in the six or seven years he was not writing for them that it was very hard for him to go back and try to write the way he used to. So that a story that used to take him a week to turn out would take him twice as long, because all of a sudden his story values didn't hold true any longer. And, I don't know, maybe that was one of the things contributing to his end—he just couldn't do it anymore, and he didn't know what else to do. You spent 20-odd years trying to write something and then you stop and try to pick it up again and it just doesn't work anymore.

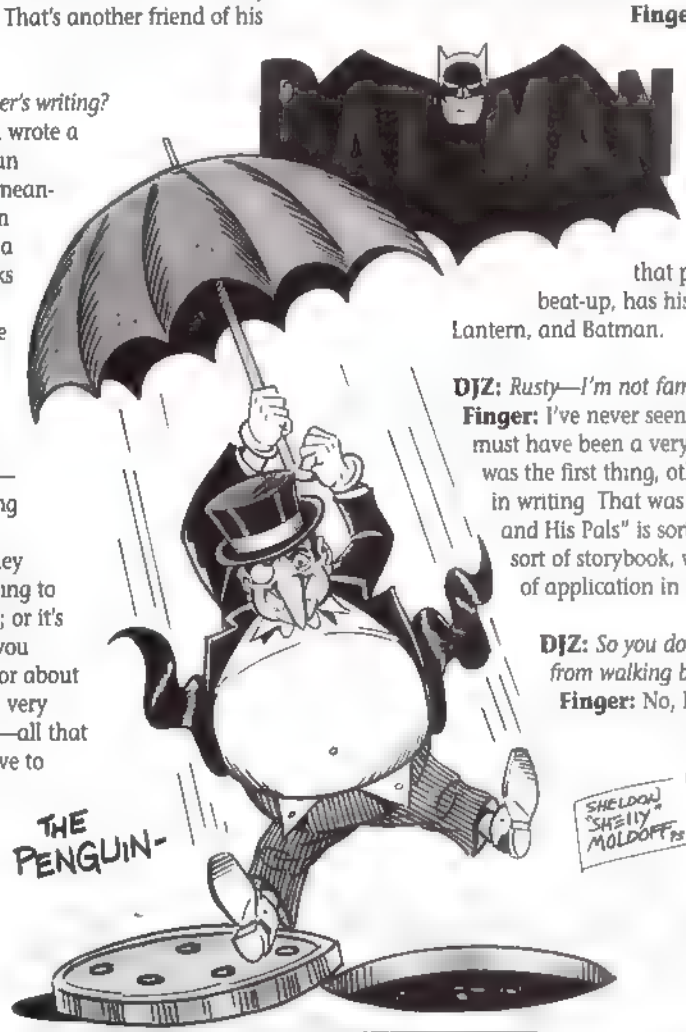
DJZ: *Was Batman all he did for National/DC?*
Finger: No. He wrote and conceived The Green Lantern for many, many years He also would write other stories on the side—The Hawkman, The Atom, Flash Wonder Woman—anyone who was in the National house. There are stories there that he wrote. Those I have no idea about at all—they're just part of the pulps that were produced. But that picture I gave you, the one that's kind of beat-up, has his three characters: Rusty, The Green Lantern, and Batman.

DJZ: *Rusty—I'm not familiar with...*
Finger: I've never seen a comic with "Rusty and His Pals"—it must have been a very short-lived series of books. I think that was the first thing, other than Batman, that he was involved in writing That was for National. I have a feeling that "Rusty and His Pals" is sort of like a Dead End Kids/Bowery Boys sort of storybook, which of course would not have any kind of application in the 1980s at all

DJZ: *So you don't keep in touch with comics at all, aside from walking by a rack and looking?*
Finger: No, I don't. When Ian was staying here for a couple of months while his mother's loft was being redone, he walked into the house with more comic books than I have ever seen since I was a kid.

[**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Fred Finger passed away recently, long after the above conversation appeared in* Comics Interview. *It contains a few errors of fact and memory, obvious to knowledgeable readers. We'll sure someone will let us know what they are.*]

Fin



According to his son, another Bill Finger creation was Batman villain, The Penguin. Here's a Sheldon Moldoff commission piece courtesy of Jerry Boyd. ©1999 DC Comics.

re:

continued from page 123

served the meal with pomp and polish and collected the tips, but the chef was off in the kitchen working over a hot stove to create a feast for the patrons. Bill Finger, as chef, saw damned little of the glory or tips. Kane would never have shared *any* of the glory had he not been forced to. You can't convince me that that was honorable or fair.

There can be legitimate differences of opinion about the relative contributions one makes in a collaboration, but to excise completely the contributions of a partner is quite another matter. That's what Kane tried to do for a quarter of a century. Little wonder that he had a mad-on against me for the next 25 years.

As for the matter of who created Bat Lash: Carmine Infantino noted that the concept originated with Shelly Mayer, but I can hardly credit Mayer as the "creator" of the strip, although there is plenty to admire in Shelly's creative career. He simply supplied a kernel of an idea. Carmine's plots may give him a slightly greater claim as a co-creator of Bat Lash, but the writer and artist who gave life to the character, Sergio Aragonés and Nick Cardy, are the ones that I would call the creators. It is how a concept is developed that makes all the difference between a success and failure. The writer is absolutely essential to the act of creation. When an artist does more than merely illustrate a scene as described by a writer, then he too becomes a "storyteller"—a creator, or, to reiterate an oftentimes forgotten role in comics creation—a *writer.*

Ideas may be borrowed or inherited from others, but it is the writer who puts them all together to create a world that flows in time with characters of convincing motivation and consistent character—in short, a story that tweaks our sense of drama and humor. When an artist contributes to these elements of storytelling, he transcends drawing pictures and he too becomes a writer—a storyteller, a creator.

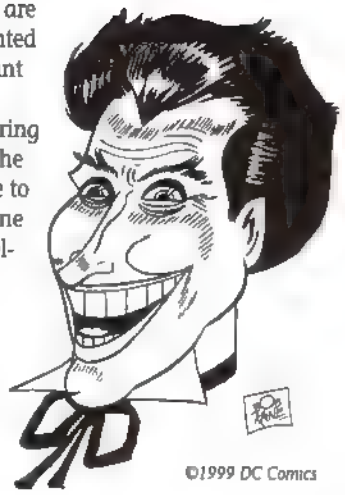
This reminds me that Robert Kanigher claims to have "created" the Silver Age Flash. What did he contribute? A scarlet speedster who was a slow-poke scientist-type in his civilian identity? Very original. It was only when John Broome, Carmine Infantino, and Julie Schwartz fleshed out the strip that it came alive. Such a narrow notion of "creator" is like the claim that Kirby created Spider-Man because he had a similar type character that he had been toying with for years. A Kirby Spider-Man would have been totally different from the Lee-Ditko creation.

That's like my claiming I created the Silver Age Atom because my idea may have sparked someone else's creative juices. And Steve Ditko's ramblings about the concept "creator" in *A/E* V2#3 were a confused muddle. Somebody ought to point out what it takes to create a viable concept—it takes a writer who develops the warp and woof of the tapestry. If one doesn't know how to weave, the concept is little more than a basket filled with balls of colored twine.

As they might say in the animation business, a model sheet alone is *not* enough; the presentation must have a story to go with it. It is the artist as writer that so many of us admire in a Carl Barks, Will Eisner, and Terry Moore. There are many who can draw as well as these three, but few can tell stories quite so well. These are *writers* par excellence. They just happen to be good artists, as well.

The only comics I find worth reading are the ones that are written well. If I just wanted pretty pictures, I'd buy a poster book. I want *stories.* What passes too often for comics these days are little more than kiddie coloring books where somebody has even colored the pictures for me, leaving me with very little to do except flip the pages and count the scene changes. I've got a remote-control channel-changer that gives me the same thrill.

I've rambled on again. I'd call my letters "But I Digress," but somebody else grabbed that title first. And he gets paid. *Hmmmm!!??* I'm doing something wrong here. But I'm having fun. I hope you all are.



©1999 DC Comics

Jerry Bails
21221 Thiele Ct.
St. Clair Shores, MI 48081

Couldn't agree more, Jerry, except that I continue to feel that Shelly Mayer, Robert Kanigher, and even possibly you yourself might still have to be counted as "co-creators" of Bat Lash and the Silver Age Flash and Atom, respectively, in any account that doesn't limit the term "co-creator" to an artificial maximum of two people. (See the upcoming A/E V3#2 for the full, unfettered story of the Silver Age Atom—who may have had as many as four *co-creators.)*

As for the matter of The Joker, it's hard to reconcile the tempting Man Who Laughs *connection (especially once you've glimpsed the oft-reproduced photo of Veidt as the protagonist) with Jerry Robinson's tale of creating the clown prince of crime based on a playing card, after which of course the villain is named.*

Anyway, onward:

To Ye Editor, the most fascinating result of our previous issue concerns the final panel of Neal Adams' last Avengers *panel back in 1972. This episode's appeal to me stems partly from the fact that, for once, the subject matter has nothing whatsoever to do with any divergent memories between Neal and myself on what did or did not happen during our collaboration on the Kree-Skrull War issues of* The Avengers. *In fact, Neal is merely an offstage presence in this latest case of what I've called "The Rashomon Effect."*

Instead, it has to do with this passage I wrote for A/E V2#4, and the climactic end-panel of Avengers *#96:*

"One of the most intriguing aspects of the final, 2/3-page panel in #96 never made it out of the Marvel offices. As I pored over Neal's exquisite pencils of Rick floating in the Neg-Zone, something nagged at the back of my mind. Something was wrong, but I couldn't figure out what it was. And then I saw it:

"Rick Jones' outstretched hand had *six fingers!*

"I had Tom Palmer remove the extra digit when inking the page, and I don't recall if I ever even mentioned it to Neal. But I've always been curious—did he just make an uncharacteristic slip of the drawing pencil, or did he do that just to see if I'd spot it?"

Soon after copies of CBA *#4 hit the mails*

and the comics shops, I was startled but delighted to receive the following e-mail from my erstwhile friend and colleague Steve Englehart, who of course during the mid-1970s became one of the comics industry's most exciting writers:

AVENGERS 76
28
FOR, NOW, HIS MIND IS FILLED FOR ONE SOUL-WRENCHING INSTANT WITH THE FACE AND VOICE OF MAD-WELL, CRYING:
I'M SORRY, RICK!
HOLY JOE!
FORGIVE ME! FORGIVE ME!!
THEN, HE IS SOMEWHERE AGAIN... AND SOMEWHEN!
I KNOW THIS PLACE
I'M BACK IN... THE NEGATIVE ZONE!
AND HERE COMES THE WELCOME WAGON... WITH ANNIHILUS!
NEXT ISSUE: THE FINAL CHAPTER!
GODHOOD'S END!
RICK HAS SIX FINGER HERE; PLEASE TAKE ONE OFF, AS CAREFULLY AS POSSIBLE WHICHEVER ONE YOU FEEL WILL BE MISSED LEAST. PLEASE STAT BEFORE FIXING IF YOU CAN.

Hi Roy—

In reading your article in *Alter Ego*, Vol. 2, #4, in which you match your memory against Neal's, I found one spot where *my* memories differ from yours. The reason I'm writing to you instead of to the magazine is, I have no interest in making this a three-way contest, or getting in anybody's face. If you feel it makes the record even clearer by printing this, you can, but it's no big deal to me.

The point in question is Rick Jones' six fingers.

What I remember is this: Neal had run 'way past deadline on that issue, and had only turned in 10 (or maybe 13) pages the day before the rest of the book had to go out. He told you that he would have the rest of it the following day, which for anyone else would have been impossible. That night he went to his cubicle at the DC offices with Al Weiss, Len Wein, Marv Wolfman, and anybody else of us young guys who could stay up all night. I wasn't one because I had started work filling in for Gary Friedrich on Marvel's staff.

That night they did stay up all night long, penciling and inking all the remaining pages—a typical Neal bravura performance. The next morning, 9 A.M., Neal showed up at Marvel with the pages and you or John [*Verpoorten*] gave them to me to proof at once. I did, and when I got to the last page I found the six fingers. Neal was still around, so I said to him, "Good joke, Neal"—after all, those fingers were the biggest thing on the page. And Neal said, "What are you talking about?" I'm convinced he really didn't know he'd done it. And I was the one who then took that extra finger out. But what I really loved was that those six fingers were "anatomically correct"—if hands had six fingers, that's what they'd look like. I've been sorry ever since that I didn't xerox that page pre-amputation.

Other than that, both ends of the magazine continue to be something I drop everything to read when it arrives. It's great to see what remains the high point in comics relived with such depth, candor, and enthusiasm.

Steve Englehart

I immediately e-mailed Steve back that I was surprised at his recollections—not because he was saying he *had pointed that sixth finger out to me, which I was totally ready to concede if that was his memory, but because it seemed to me that the extra digit must have been spotted in the* pencil *stage, not after it had been inked.*

Why? Well, CBA *editor Jon B. Cooke had told me weeks before that a photocopy he'd received from inker Tom Palmer of the black-&-white art for that page of* Avengers *#96 contained a note in which I directed some unnamed person to remove the sixth finger.*

Tom, who had inked Avengers *#93-95 and the first half of #96, had been sent proofs of the entire latter issue, because he was to ink John Buscema's pencils for #97, and might need reference in order to make something consistent with what had been drawn in #96.*

I phoned Tom, who confirmed that he hadn't inked that final page; he thought the inking was Neal's, but a Neal imitating Palmer. Tom graciously (and immediately) mailed me photocopies of all pages of #96, complete with my proofreading notes in the margins—and there was my note at bottom right of the final page, in all-capital letters. The reproduction of that panel and note here couldn't reproduce all of my pencil-scratching, but here's what it says—addressed to no one in particular, at least not by name, and flanked by a big dot above and a big asterisk below, as was my wont:

"RICK HAS SIX FINGER[S] HERE; PLEASE TAKE ONE OUT, AS CAREFULLY AS POSSIBLE, WHICHEVER ONE YOU FEEL WILL BE MISSED LEAST. PLEASE STAT BEFORE *FIXING, IF YOU CAN."*

And so mystery was piled upon admittedly minor mystery.

If Steve was indeed the first to spot that sixth finger (now forever lost, because, alas, no one followed my request to photostat the page before the change was made) and to bring it to the attention of production manager John Verpoorten and myself, then who is my note *to?*

To Steve? (Why would I have to, if he spotted it in the first place?)

To Neal, Alan Weiss, and cohorts, the alleged inkers? (Steve's memory was that the page was already inked when he spotted the error, yet there are no telltale signs of an art change on the photocopy, not that that proves anything.)

To Tom Palmer? (At that stage, despite the splash page credit for "Palmer & Adams & Weiss," I was assuming that Tom had inked that final page. Or

©1999 Marvel Entertainment

rather, to be perfectly frank, I wasn't thinking much at all about who had inked it, since that wasn't the point.)

By this stage I was determined to get to the bottom of this puzzle, so I snail-mailed Steve a copy of the black-&-white with its penciled border note (at the same time suggesting that he write a series sometime for A/E about his own groundbreaking 1970s work at Marvel).

A few days later, after another e-mail from me but before the photocopy reached him, I received this from Steve via hyperspace:

Hi Roy—

I can't get any closer to the "truth," either. My memory is that Neal *et al.* penciled and inked the last half of the book overnight—which *does* beg the question of when it got written and lettered. Possibly, since Neal liked to do thumbnails, he had made quick blowups of the full-sized pages so lettering could be done, and you wrote off those or off the thumbnails, and then they only inked the pages. But I (think I'm) clear on (a) 10 pages due the next day, your editorial heat at the prospect, and Neal's blithe confidence, (b) the *ad hoc* Crusty Bunkers—with Len and Marv indeed doing blacks and zips (so I heard)—overnight at DC, (c) pages presented the next morning and my spotting the finger. That last I'd really have a hard time *not* believing, because as you may remember I was trying to be an artist at the time (and wasn't very good), so even though I'd been Neal's first Crusty B., being asked to "fix" a Neal Adams hand on what everybody already knew was a classic storyline—figuring out which finger could go—and *doing* it with the deadline hanging over me—remains a stark memory for me.

A final confusion enhancer: I do not think Tom inked those pages, but I do think Neal tried to emulate Tom when Neal inked the ones he inked. I'm sure the figures on the last page are Neal, but a Palmerized Neal.

Finally, I (think I'm) sure that I didn't see the finger until it was dumped on my desk to get proofread, so I didn't bring it to your attention in the writing phase.

Screw my series. We should do an entire A/E on *Avengers* #96 alone!

Steve Englehart

In 2000, Marvel finally collected all of the "Kree-Skrull War" issues of The Avengers *(#89-97) and—with spiffy new Neal Adams cover art (repro'd above)—published the compilation as part of their* Marvel's Finest *trade paperback series. [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]*

Intriguing, though I was and remain certain that, though I may have scripted the scene from blowups of thumbnails, I never worked from the thumbnail sketches themselves. A few days later, after he had seen the photocopy of that final page of the issue, Steve e-mailed:

Hi Roy—

Even though I "remember" spotting the sixth finger, my best guess *now* would be that you spotted it and the note was to me, as a proofreader/production guy.

I still think that's Neal; Al had a juicier line. But I (think I) know there were others on that job besides Al, Len, and Marv—could have been Steve Harper or one of those guys who was around and could ape Neal.

If my memory of removing the finger is correct, I did a very careful job. I had worked with Neal so I knew how to fake him, and I knew how much stock he put in good art, and I knew (as I said last time) how special this book was.

But as I said when I started this, I don't have my ego involved in it, so whatever you come up with is fine by me.

Steve Englehart

Actually, Ye Editor doesn't think anyone has any ego involvement re this particular matter, which is a nice switch. Steve showed himself willing to admit that even strong memories he had might be in error here and there—and my own less-vivid memory of spotting the sixth finger, as I admitted in my first e-mail back to Steve, might very well have consisted only of seeing it when Steve pointed it out.

A tempest in a teapot? Sure, even by comic book standards. But Steve, like myself, likes to get things right historically whenever he can, and we both figured the above exchange of e-mails might serve as a good example of how difficult it is to establish the exact truth about anything in (or out of) comics, even with the best will in the world.

Thanks, Steve, for your added thoughts about an aspect of the Kree-Skrull War. We may not have been able to get 100% to the bottom of the matter, but it was fun to dig around in the past, just to see what we came up with.

So—does Neal, or perhaps Len Wein or Marv Wolfman or Alan Weiss, remember at what point that sixth finger was taken out? If so, we hope they'll let us know. They'll all get copies of this issue of CBA/AE, *so let's see if any of them cares to respond....*

A couple of corrections with regard to previous issues:

Robin Snyder, editor/publisher of the excellent The Comics, *informs us that the preposition "of" was somehow left out of the Ayn Rand quote in the Spider-Man article by Steve Ditko in issue #3. The full quote should have read: "A truth is the identification of a fact of reality."*

And I, and no one else, accidentally referred to fan Andy Yanchus in the Rutland parade article in #3 as a future "DC colorist," when in fact he would later perform those chores for Marvel, not DC.

A few readers also pointed out that Carl Gafford was not entirely correct when he said that Avengers *#119 in 1994 was the last of the so-called "Rutland stories" from Marvel. As reader Jon Nuquist wrote: "In 1981,The Defenders actually made a brief return to the top of Bald Mountain in the 100th issue of their book. It was by DeMatteis, Perlin, and Sinnott. Perhaps not exactly a 'classic' issue in the grand scheme of things, but hey, I was 14, I'd just started collecting, so it's a classic to me!"*

One or two other readers mentioned other later Rutland appearances, though rarely featuring cameos by comics pros, which was the prime subject of Carl's article. We'd mention what they were—but we misplaced the letters.

Our thanks to all and sundry who suggested subjects and people they'd like to see covered in future issues. Perhaps, now that Alter Ego *is spinning off into a separate, full-length publication again, we'll get around to them.*

In particular, reader Shane Foley suggested about a zillion features which I alone could write about my own 34-years-and-counting career in comics:

Dear Roy,

Wonderful to hear of the response to *A/E* being so strong and that you're going out on your own

Can I tell you why *A/E* reminds me of *Fantastic Four Annual* #5? It's my sentimental favorite of all annuals—I was 11 when it came out and still love it. Why? The reason that's relevant here is that it had that wonderful feel of a large, long story with lots of smaller features following. When the main course is over, there's still lots of delectable bits' n' pieces of dessert to go.

Just like *A/E*!!! Yep... it feels that good.

In the last issues (I have only #1 to #3 so far), you had features on Ditko/Spider-Man, Lee/Kirby/F.F., Gardner Fox, Kane/Batman, etc. Wonderful main courses. But then you followed up with the Invaders and Captain Thunder pieces. It's these little extras that add to the joy of each issue. (See? I liked *F.F. Annual* in '67 better than the *Avengers Annual* that year *not* because of the story quality, but because of the *extras*. And

A little extra something especially for Shane Foley: Unpublished pencils by Gene Colan for the Thomas/Colan "Captain Marvel" story in Marvel Super-Heroes *#13, 1967. Captain Marvel ©1999 Marvel Entertainment. Courtesy of David Hamilton.*

I'm sure that was Stan's decision, not yours, so you don't have to cry!)

May I add my fannish input to what I'd like to see in these little bits? It's all very general, but here goes anyway....

(1) I'd love to see a page or two each issue talking on issues such as what it was like to take over *Fantastic Four*. Any background on putting Johnny in a red F.F. suit, on putting in Medusa, on putting a marriage strain on Reed and Sue? How about your "Rock around the Cosmos" story? Why was *F.F.* #132 so crammed, when an extra issue could have fleshed out the story a bit more? What did it take to get John Buscema to draw #127 and #130 the way he did? And did finding the new *Conan* strip so enjoyable take the shine off doing the *F.F.*? A couple of pages of memories, surely.

And there must be a ton of stuff about doing *Sub-Mariner, Hulk, Dr. Strange,* and *Daredevil*. What about *Captain Marvel* with Gene Colan? What were your thoughts on what happened after you left? Were you still involved? And what led to your and Gil Kane's revamp, apart from declining sales? (For all the merits of that revamp, I was bitterly disappointed when the green and white Kree warrior disappeared in *CM* #16. A lot of wasted potential, I thought. That issue by Goodwin, Heck, and Shores remains one of my '60s favorites, despite the direction of the ending.)

There are many of us, I'd bet, who'd even love to read about Man-Wolf! Yep. And the 1970s *Journey into Mystery*. And Ka-Zar. And *Werewolf by Night*. And the Giant-Sizes. You worked on *Iron Man* #47. Were there plans to take over properly, that were scuttled?

Hey, this is real trivia stuff, but surely a few pages per issue isn't too much to be self-indulgent with, is it? And I haven't even mentioned *Arak* and *Wonder Woman* and....

(2) Give us a tour of your working relationship with the likes of John Buscema—his strong points, his grumblings, and the frustrating stuff (like his forgetting the changes you made to the opening of "The Snout in the Dark," I think it was).

You could do that with any of them...Colan, Trimpe, Adkins. And particularly the neglected, sometimes maligned, greats... Heck and Tuska.

(3) And here's the most essential one. Continue your *Conan Classic* memories, starting with *Conan the Barbarian* #10 and 11, then 14 to 25. Then do the *Savage Sword* issues that you were unable to comment on. There's another couple of pages per issue.

Look, I know you know what you want to do, and you must have a ton of stuff if you can fill four whole books a year. But I just thought, for my own sake, really, I'd let you know that for my money this sort of trivia is *great!* (And believe me, I normally hate reading gossipy trivia, but I really respect you guys who worked in the Silver Age and I find your memories, Roy, very fair and readable.)

All the best from the Land Down Under,

Shane Foley
via e-mail

Actually, Shane, the kind of personal item you mention above was one of my major initial motivations for offering to put together an "Alter Ego section" for Comic Book Artist. *And, from time to time—at least partly to spur other Golden Age and Silver Age creators to do the same!—I'll be doing the kinds of features you suggest.*

Though my memories (and the relevant stories) on some series from those days are stronger than on some others, I figure that each tidbit adds just that much fodder for a potentially definitive history of comic books which, of course, will never be written.

Weirdly, one thing on your want list is even now being done: At the request of the Barcelona-based company Planeta/Forum, which recently began its second reprinting of the entire run of Conan the Barbarian *for the Spanish market, I write about 1000 words each month on recollections about each particular issue; we're up to the mid-#40s already. But of course these articles, translated into Spanish, are not generally available in the U.S.*

As you saw above, I've invited Steve Englehart to write about his work during the Silver Age. An exhaustive (and perhaps exhausting) interview with another favorite collaborator, Herb Trimpe, is in the works, ditto with Gil Kane and others.

And this is as good a place as any to extend an invitation to other creators (writers, artists, editors, et al.) from the 1970s and before—and occasionally from afterward, in cases where CBA *editor Jon Cooke has no objections—to share their remembrances with us. Those memories need not agree with mine, naturally; Ye Editor asks only that they be as forthright as one can make them.*

Please send any correspondence, feature ideas, unpublished artwork, or whatever to the address on our editorial page (pg. 2). We may be a bit lax about having a letters section every issue—but not about reading each piece of correspondence that comes our way.

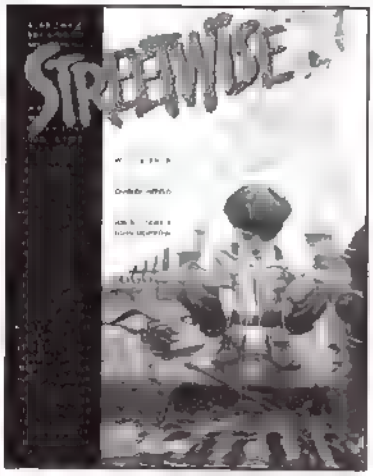
ALSO FROM TWOMORROWS PUBLISHING

ALL-STAR COMPANION
CELEBRATING THE JSA'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY!

ROY THOMAS has assembled the most thorough look ever taken at All-Star Comics

- Covers by **MURPHY ANDERSON!**
- Issue-by-issue coverage of **ALL-STAR COMICS #1–57**, the original JLA–JSA teamups, & the **'70s ALL-STAR REVIVAL!**
- Art from an unpublished **1945 JSA** story!
- Looks at **FOUR "LOST" ALL-STAR** issues!
- Rare art by **BURNLEY, DILLIN, KIRBY, INFANTINO, KANE, KUBERT, ORDWAY, ROSS, WOOD** and more!!

(208-page Trade Paperback)



STREETWISE
TOP ARTISTS DRAWING STORIES OF THEIR LIVES!

An unprecedented assembly of talent drawing **NEW** autobiographical stories

- Barry **WINDSOR-SMITH** • C.C. **BECK**
- Sergio **ARAGONÉS** • Walter **SIMONSON**
- Brent **ANDERSON** • Nick **CARDY**
- Roy **THOMAS** & John **SEVERIN**
- Paul **CHADWICK** • Rick **VEITCH**
- Murphy **ANDERSON** • Joe **KUBERT**
- Evan **DORKIN** • Sam **GLANZMAN**
- Plus Art **SPIEGELMAN**, Jack **KIRBY**, more! Cover by **RUDE** • Foreword by **EISNER**

(160-Page Trade Paperback)

THE COLLECTED JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR
VOLUMES 1-3

To date, **THREE TRADE PAPERBACK VOLUMES** have been published in this ongoing tribute to the King of comics, **JACK KIRBY!**

- **VOLUME ONE** reprints TJKC #1-9, plus 30 pages of new art!
- **VOLUME TWO** reprints TJKC #10-12, plus 30 pages of new art, and a new tour of the Kirbys' home!
- **VOLUME THREE** reprints TJKC #13-15 plus 30 pages of new art!

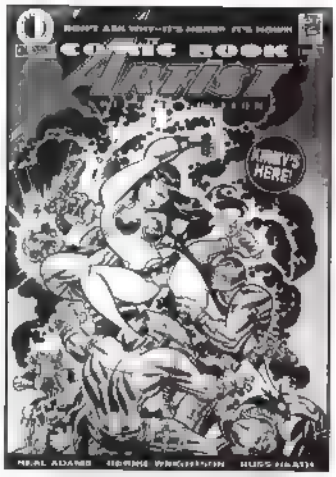
(Trade Paperbacks, varying page counts)

THE COMIC BOOK ARTIST COLLECTION, VOL. ONE

Reprints the Eisner Award-winning **COMIC BOOK ARTIST #1-3**, plus over **50 NEW PAGES** of features and art

- An unpublished story by **JACK KIRBY!**
- An interview with **NEAL ADAMS** about his **SUPERMAN VS. MUHAMMAD ALI** book (including unused art)!
- Unpublished **BERNIE WRIGHTSON** art!
- An unused story by **JEFFREY JONES!**
- Extensive new **ALAN WEISS** interview (including unpublished art), & more!

(228-page Trade Paperback)



COMIC BOOK ARTIST SPECIAL EDITION #1

An **ALL-NEW** comic-size extravaganza focusing on DC Comics of the 1970s.

- All-new **BRUCE TIMM** cover & interview!
- **MARK EVANIER & STEVE SHERMAN** on **KIRBY'S FOURTH WORLD!**
- **NEAL ADAMS** on his **SUPERMAN VS. MUHAMMAD ALI!**
- **RUSS HEATH** on **SGT. ROCK!**
- **ALEX TOTH** on his '70s DC work!
- A **BERNIE WRIGHTSON** portfolio!

(68-page limited edition)

WARREN COMPANION
THE ULTIMATE REFERENCE GUIDE!

Reprints **COMIC BOOK ARTIST #4** (totally reformatted), plus nearly **200 PAGES OF NEW MATERIAL**, including

- New painted cover by **ALEX HORLEY!**
- Dozens of **NEW FEATURES & INTERVIEWS** covering Warren's history from 1956-83!
- A definitive **WARREN CHECKLIST!**
- New articles on **CORBEN, FRAZETTA, DITKO** and others, and interviews with **WRIGHTSON, WARREN, EISNER, ADAMS, COLAN** and many more!

(288-page Trade Paperback and Limited Edition Hardcover)

MR. MONSTER
HIS BOOKS OF FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE, VOL. ZERO!

MR. MONSTER is back with a **NEW BOOK COLLECTION** featuring **TWELVE** twisted tales of Forbidden Knowledge

- Over 30 pages of **ALL-NEW** Mr. Monster art and stories by **MICHAEL T. GILBERT!**
- Collects the hard-to-find **MR. MONSTER** stories from **A-1, CRACK-A-BOOM!** and **DARK HORSE PRESENTS!**
- The lost Mr. Monster **NEWSPAPER STRIP!**
- New 8-page **FULL-COLOR STORY** by **KEITH GIFFEN & MICHAEL T. GILBERT!**

(136-page Trade Paperback)

FAWCETT COMPANION
THE BEST OF FCA!

Editor **PAUL HAMERLINCK** has assembled the best art and articles from the long-lived *Fawcett Collectors of America* fan/prozine, devoted to the artists, writers, and editors of the **MARVEL FAMILY, SPY SMASHER, BULLETMAN,** and Co. Readers rave about the new **FCA** sections in **ALTER EGO**, and this book delivers even more, including

- A new **JERRY ORDWAY** cover!
- Obscure art by **C.C. BECK, MARC SWAYZE, KURT SCHAFFENBERGER,** & other greats!
- Interviews and historical articles galore!

(160-page Trade Paperback)

TwoMorrows. Bringing New Life To Comics Fandom.

VISA MasterCard

TwoMorrows Publishing • 1812 Park Dr. • Raleigh, NC 27605 USA • 919-833-6092 • FAX: 919-833-8023 • e-mail: twomorrow@aol.com • www.twomorrows.com

"There Was Nothing We Couldn't Do!"

ROY THOMAS' FINAL INTERVIEW WITH GIL KANE, ART ST AND FRIEND

Transcribed by Jon B. Knutson

[**INTERVIEWER/EDITOR'S NOTE:** *By no stretch of the imagination would I proclaim this "The Last Gil Kane Interview" or any such thing. However, I spoke with Gil at some length on July 17, 1999, about half a year before his untimely death in January 2000, concerning the 1940s and 1950s at Timely (later Marvel) Comics. Our discussion ranged far afield, as we had both expected; and his remarks on Timely and a few related subjects appeared in* Alter Ego, *Vol. 3, #3. When I began thinking about material to add to this compilation yclept* Alter Ego· The Comic Book Artist Collection, *it seemed fitting somehow to print the remainder of his remarks herein, to accompany the beautiful illustration Gil did for me in 1970 and later let me use as the cover of* A/E *V2#2, which featured some of the late-'60s parody pieces which he penciled for Topps. Gil's comments in this part of the interview deal largely with the so-called Golden Age of Comics (our ostensible subject), but cover other areas, as well... and since this represents one of the last times I spoke with Gil, even by phone, I'm grateful for every word.*—**R.T.**]

ROY THOMAS: Some of your first work was for MLJ, wasn't it?

GIL KANE: That *was* my first work. "MLJ" stood for "Morris, Louis, John" at Archie Comics. Before they were called Archie, they were MLJ. It meant nothing; they didn't develop an identity. I started working there when Bob Montana developed "Archie." *Henry Aldrich* was one of the most popular radio shows at the time; it was derived from a Broadway show. What happened was that MLJ wanted a "Henry Aldrich" type.

RT: The actual name of the radio show was *The Aldrich Family,* but teenager Henry Aldrich was the real star. Did *Junior Miss* or some other Broadway show inspire *The Aldrich Family?*

KANE: Oh, no, it was a "Henry Aldrich" show: *What a Life!* And the same actor who played him on stage played him on the radio.

What happened was that, a little later, Charlie Biro led a renegade band of artists over to Lev Gleason, away from MLJ. He took himself, Bob Wood, Bob Montana, and several people who were MLJ regulars. That's when MLJ began to fall back and rely on people like Irv Novick, who stayed. They became more of a secondary company. The only thing that distinguished them was that they developed a character called "The Hangman."

RT: "The Shield" and "Black Hood" lasted a while.

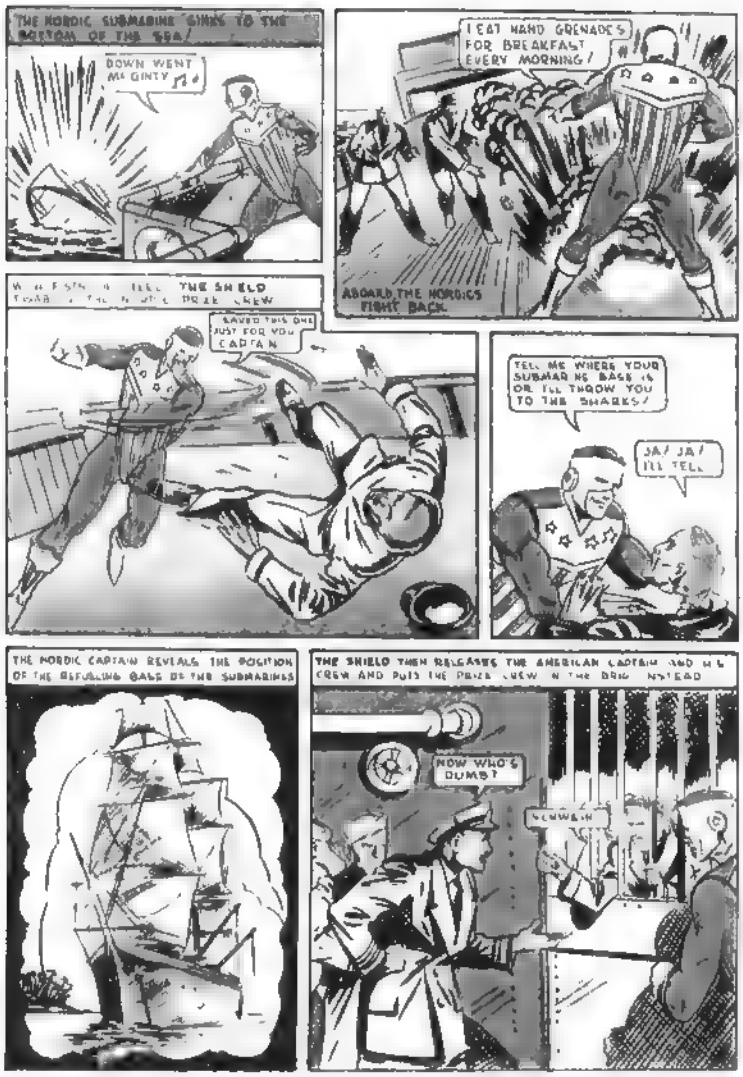
KANE: They lasted, but "The Hangman" was more popular. It was all exactly at the time they developed "Archie." That was their identity after about a year, once they got an artist after Bob Montana left. There was an artist named Harry Sahle, who had been Carl Burgos' ghost on "The Human Torch." He was very fast, and he turned out what became the new Archie character. In other words, his work was based on Montana, but with adaptation and interpretation. Sahle became the center point, and Novick went into the Army. They folded most of their characters into Veronica and Betty and the rest of them, and built up the thing.

Harry Sahle was scandalously in love with a 19-year-old inker named Vivian something, and they worked there for about a year and a half or so until Sahle went into the Army. What happened was that the two of them were hired away by Quality Comics; they were offered a contract to work together. As I remember it, what happened next was that "Busy" Arnold [publisher of Quality] fell in love with Vivian, and Harry died of a broken heart before the end of the War

[**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Rather than "Vivian," could Gil perhaps mean* "Violet *Barclay," who was depicted in Stan Lee's 1947 book* Secrets behind the Comics *as "the glamorous girl inker of 'Rusty' and many other strips"? That book's caricature of her was printed in* A/E *V3#6.*—**R.T.**]

Anyway, "Archie" gave MLJ its identity; they came out of that as Archie Comics, with a whole new point of view. Novick wasn't really needed; he came out of the Army and did some "Black Hood" stuff, but nothing else. None of the straight stuff was selling, and the teenage stuff and the anima-

Gil Kane, flanked by sketches of Green Lantern and the Captain Marvel of 1969-70. [Art ©estate of Gil Kane; Green Lantern ©2001 DC Comics; Captain Marvel ©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.; sketches courtesy of David G. Hamilton and Jerry K. Boyd, respectively.]


THE NORDIC SUBMARINE SINKS TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA!
DOWN WENT McGINTY
I EAT HAND GRENADES FOR BREAKFAST EVERY MORNING!
ABOARD THE NORDICS FIGHT BACK.
SAVED THIS ONE JUST FOR YOU CAPTAIN
TELL ME WHERE YOUR SUBMARINE BASE IS OR I'LL THROW YOU TO THE SHARKS!
JA! JA! I'LL TELL
THE NORDIC CAPTAIN REVEALS THE POSITION OF THE REFUELING BASE OF THE SUBMARINES
NOW WHO'S DUMB?
SCHWEIN

Irv Novick's Shield goes into anti-Nazi action in Pep Comics *#2 (Feb. 1940). Thanks to Michael T. Gilbert. [©2001 Archie Publications, Inc.]*

tion material seemed to be going; but it seemed to be a very hard time, just after the War

RT: After you worked at MLJ in the early 1940s, you worked for the Jack Binder shop?

KANE: Yeah. I was fired by MLJ. I worked there for about six months, and I was starting to do pencils. Then, after a period, they let me go, and I was still not old enough for the draft, so I got a job for a couple of days at the Jack Binder shop.

RT: Just for a couple of days?

KANE: Yes. It was just an enormous room with dozens of desks in a row. A lot of the shop's work was for Fawcett, but Binder was doing work for a lot of companies. He was one of the biggest agents at the time. There were several others, but he lasted longer than a lot of them. So I worked for him. Then I met a guy by the name of—would you believe, my memory's—

The Shield and Hangman may have been buddy-buddy with Archie Andrews on the cover of Pep Comics *#36 (Feb. 1943), but ere long he'd push them out of the comics entirely! Riverdale rules! [©2001 Archie Publications, Inc.]*

RT: Well, it's been a long time!

KANE: ...sort of like Clay or Clive Kadiddle He was a fine artist, and we became friendly. What happened was, after a while I started working for Simon and Kirby....

RT: This was when they were at DC?

KANE: Right, 1943. John Beardsley was the editor of Quality at the time, and he was a friend of Joe Simon's. He recommended me. They were trying to turn out quota, to do as many pages as possible. So I went over there and I did "Sandman," I did "Boy Commandos"—I *believe* I did "Boy Commandos," I never remembered "Boy Commandos"—but I do know I did "Guardian "

RT: Right—"The Newsboy Legion." It was always hard for me to tell "Newsboy Legion" and "Boy Commandos" apart, except for The Guardian in the former.

KANE: The point is, they would give me a script to pencil every time I came in, and what I did was copy Jack Kirby. Joe and Jack would do the splash, and they'd get somebody to ink my stuff, and they would hand it in as part of their quota. Ultimately I got a job with Bernie Baily.

RT: You were part of *his* shop in about '44 or so?

KANE: He was the last guy I worked for. I worked for him for about six months before I went into the service. We'd be working all hours of the day and night. I would say I learned a lot working for Bernie. I learned to be freer. As a result, I won't say I was a great professional, but I did get my first published cover done through Bernie. I don't remember what company it was, though. There were just a bunch of chicken-scratch companies that he

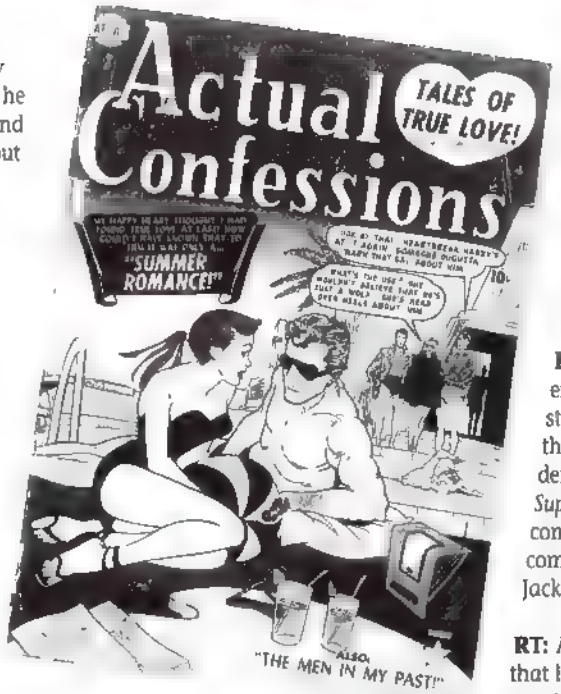
BUT THE DARING UPRISING IS NIPPED IN THE BUD AS STRONG NAZI RE-INFORCEMENTS COME UP!
YOU ARE TRAPPED, PIGS! WILL YOU GIVE IN OR DO WE KILL YOU HERE?
OKAY, NAZI... I GUESS WE NEVER DID HAVE MUCH OF A CHANCE!
THESE ARE THE DEVILS WHO ESCAPED FROM DER CONCENTRATION CAMP HERR KAPITAN!
SO? TURN THEM OVER TO DER GESTAPO... THEY KNOW HOW TO DEAL MIT DOGS LIKE THESE!
FAMILIAR, ARROGANT FIGURE, SURROUNDED BY STONY-FACED STORM-TROOPERS, SWAGGERS TO THE SCENE...
WOT'S DE IDEAR O' ALL DIS RACKET? HOW COME WE LET DESE GORILLAS MOB UP? DO I GOTTA HAVE ANUDDER POKE AN' RUB OUT MORE O' YOUSE MONKEYS?
GAS-HOUSE!
OH-OH!!
SILENCE! AHA!! SO IT'S YOUSE MUGS AGAIN! WHAT WUZ YEZ TRYIN TA DO... MUSCLE IN ON MY TERRITORY!
I TOUGHT YOU WUZ-
SILENCE! THE FUEHRER HAS ALSO APPOINTED ME HEAD OF TH' GESTAPO, SO I C'N HANDLE DOUBLE-CROSSERS LIKE YOUSE!
FOIST WE'LL GIVE YEZ A SPEEDY TRIAL... VERY SPEEDY!!
THIRTY EASY WAYS TO FRAME A TRIAL by ADOLF HITLER
TRUE TO HIS THREAT, THE GESTAPO CHIEF LOSES NO TIME IN BRINGING THE REBELS TO "JUSTICE"—
D'YA T'INK DEY'LL GIVE US A BREAK?
DON'T BE SILLY, SCRAPPER... YOU CANNOT EXPECT JUSTICE FROM THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW THE MEANING OF THE WORD!

was servicing

I only remember that the cover had a guy holding a hat, and he had puffed sleeves, and he looked like a magician. He has a moustache and was laughing, and he was pulling somebody out of a top hat.

RT: We could probably track that down if we tried. That was your first cover? [**NOTE:** *Any help out there?*—**R.I.**]

KANE: That was my first cover, ever. I penciled and inked. Mostly I just penciled, but in that period I also penciled *and* inked. Carmine [Infantino] and I were partners. I did some stuff for Street and Smith, but I'm very vague about that. During that time I also did work for editor Ed Cronin in *Airboy*, I did "Black Angel," and I did "The Flying Dutchman." My collaborator on some of the writing was Norman Podhoretz. That's how I spent most of my time before I went into the service



Dr. Michael J. Vassallo informs us that Carmine Infantino penciled and Gil Kane inked this Timely cover for a December 1952 romance comic. Carmine has said he and Gil were never really "partners", semantics aside, however, they evidently did do some work together. [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

RT: At least many companies had their own "look" in those days.

KANE: Yeah, right. Quality had a look in the early days which was sort of the Lou Fine/Reed Crandall look, real nice to look at. It had been reduced to an approachable interpretation.

RT: A little more illustrative than most other companies.

KANE: Yeah. DC didn't have any real style going, except for the fact that they were using the Kirby stuff, which continued to do particularly well, and they had a lot of books that I guess they were dependent on: *Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Batman, Superman.* The DC super-heroes survived the other companies'. And of course that brings up romance comics. In the late '40s they came up with romance for Jack.

RT: About DC—you said earlier [**NOTE:** *see* A/E *V3#3*] that little by little DC had begun to build a more substantial line ..

KANE: I remember Bob Kane did a strip called "Clip Carson" that was his first effort to do straight stuff. After that came "Batman," but I remember him doing other things, as well. Then Chad [Grothkopf] came in, and so on

AND IN THAT MOMENT
IT WAS A RISK HITTING HIM WITH THINE HAMMER BUT I HAD TO DO IT
IT GAVE US TIME FOR A BLACKOUT YOU DIDN'T SOCK HIM HARD
JUST AS THE RAY LEAVES THE HIDEOUT
HEY! TH' BOSS IN?
CAME TO GET PAID FOR TIPPING HIM OFF ABOUT HAPPY... HEY WHO'ZE YOU?
ER YEAH WHATTAYA WANT?"

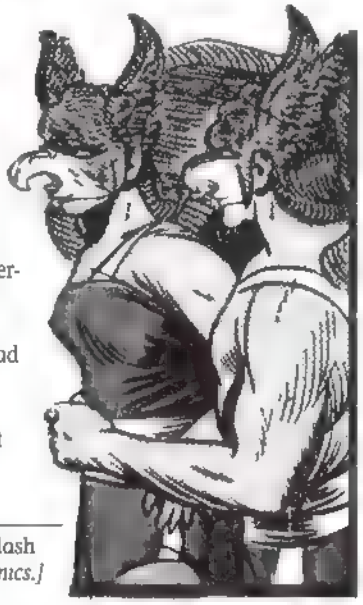
In the 1940s, Lou Fine's "The Ray" helped set the standard for quality at—where else?—Quality. But who drew these panels? Repro'd from a photocopy of the original art, courtesy of George Hagenauer. [©2001 DC Comics.]

Previous page, immediate left: *An early-'40s "Newsboy Legion" page by Simon and Kirby, repro'd from photocopies of the original art.* **Below:** *As Rich Morrissey speculated in A/E V3#5, this "Newsboy Legion" page from Star Spangled Comics #35 (Aug. 1944) was probably ghosted by a teenage Gil Kane to meet Simon and Kirby's DC quota as the draft loomed. [©2001 DC Comics.]*

IN THE CROOKS' HIDEOUT..
LET'S GIT RIDDA DESE UDDER KIDS SAM! DEY'LL BE IN OUR WAY
OKAY WHY NOT! I'LL OL PEETEY'S DA ONLY BOY I REALLY WANNA KEEP
SHORT-PANTS PETE MAKES A LAST DESPERATE EFFORT TO SAVE HIS "PARENTS"...
PLEASE! DON'T PUNISH THEM BECAUSE I RAN AWAY FROM HOME I'LL PAY YOU MONEY... I CAN GET THOUSANDS ANYTHING YOU WANT ONLY DON'T HURT THEM
HUMM! THOUSANDS HE SAYS... CAN IT BE THAT..
HAW-HAW! WE'LL GIT PLENTY JV DOUGH ANYHOW, PETE! DON' FERG T WE'RE SAVIN' YOU!
YEAH... AN WIT DIS NEWSBOY LEGION GONE, MAYBE DIS TOWN LL LOSE DAT GUARDIAN WOTS ALWAYS HANGIN' AROUN'
JIS WHEN I'M BEGINNIN' ..FE AS A FATHER. LOOK WOT HAPPENS
NEWSBOY LEGION AND SON.. CAN THIS BE THE END? NO!
A HELMETED THUNDERBOLT STRIKES!
I DIDN'T WAIT TO KNOCK! BUT DON'T PARDON ME
CRASH!
'DA CRIME-CRUSHER! DEM FISTS... DAT SHIELD LEMME OUT!
SURE, MUGG! NOW YOU'RE OUT... FOR KEEPS

But there was a consistency, a predictability, about DC. They had a style of covers, a style of lettering on the covers. I know Creig Flessel did a lot of the very early covers.

What happened eventually at [DC's sister company] All-American was that The Flash and Hawkman became very popular; they were in the same book. And I remember Shelly Moldoff, who did these immaculate imitations of *Prince Valiant* and *Flash Gordon*, and he would do it figure for figure, and panel for panel, the entire job would be lifted from different artists, primarily Foster, Raymond, and Hogarth. He'd do an absolutely remarkable job, like a counterfeit!



"Shelly"'s Hawkman and Hawkgirl, from Flash Comics *#40 (April 1943). [©2001 DC Comics.]*

RT: But in new stories that somehow had their own virtue.

KANE: Yeah, right. And, just looking at it, it was all new; there was nothing to dislike

DC pushed its "Big Eight" anthologies in 1942. October was clearly one of the best months ever for DC/AA covers—including two of Simon and Kirby's greatest and a Jerry Robinson Batman! [©2001 DC Comics.]

Every time you looked, there'd be about thirty comic books a month coming out, and you'd see the new covers on Timely or Quality or DC. It would be fresh. Gil Fox did a lot of stuff at Quality Comics. The thing was, there was a sense of newness, somehow. It was what was happening, and it just strikes me that we were born into a world—

Most of us didn't come from highly educated parents. Most of us had interests, skills, and crafts we developed as kids, which ultimately led to our professional lives. Today, you can't do a f*cking thing unless you have formal instruction in some technology. But in those days you could still be almost a street peddler and somehow or other develop hand skills and so on; and I feel like that's all over with; that's gone

The comic books we found so compelling on a day-to-day basis, that whole thing has been so totally assimilated by film, by board games, and everything else, and as a matter of fact has gone beyond that into more crucial, more critical sorts of game-playing. And it just seems to me now that what we're left with is sort of a pulp system that works as kind of a basic aesthetic for popular entertainment, but at the same time it's been left behind. I mean, you can't do *westerns* anymore, you can't do a *million* things They've totally exhausted themselves. Now it's all hand-eye technology, a push-button thing; it just seems you have to be another person entirely.

RT: Maybe we could cheer ourselves up by getting back to talking about DC, and some of the people who worked there....

KANE: Back in the old days, around the 1950s—I don't know why, but they had *Rex the Wonder Dog*, "Johnny Thunder"... and those things sustained. I did those for about *ten years!*

RT: Robert Kanigher had a hand in the creation of Rex and Johnny Thunder. He must have been kind of a force as an editor as well as a writer back then.

KANE: Eventually by the mid-1950s Jack Schiff and Mort Weisinger were given control of the standards—"Batman," "Superman," and so on—Julie and Bob were given the new stuff, the westerns, and so on. They tried *The Brave and the Bold* and so on, experimentation, turning out these different titles.

But the big thing was that Jack Schiff and Murray Boltinoff and the other guys were all stocked with the old characters and they just kept doing them. And on top of that, none of them had the kind of personality like Kanigher, who'd always been ready to champion the entire field. He'd condemn it first—he hated it, said it was all garbage—but he would do the best stuff in it. For a while at DC he was probably its most voluminous writer. He also wrote for Julie, so somewhere between writing virtually everything that he bought for himself [as editor], he did "Johnny Thunder" and *Rex the Wonder Dog*, and so forth.

The other two writers were John Broome and Gardner Fox. They handled all the other stuff at DC for Julie; in fact, Julie kept John working on practically everything. I was staggered to find out how much they did when it was all over, because—well, you know, nobody made any money, but John was always crying about money It's clear that John did a lot, an enormous volume of work.

Kanigher, as a matter of fact, did part of the romance work. Kanigher was like an independent spirit, just flicking here and there, and doing pretty much what he wanted. He had six weeks of vacation a year, and he'd take off and not leave a single f*cking piece of work for anybody to do, except maybe for his favorites, like Kubert. Mostly, his guys would just have to stand and wait. Julie, on the other hand, would never take more than two

In the 1970s Gil became one of Marvel's most important cover artists, as testified by this trio of covers repro'd from photocopies of original art, courtesy of Jerry K. Boyd. [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

weeks off, and would always have scripts on hand for every single week, whether he was there or not.

RT: Different approaches to responsibility?

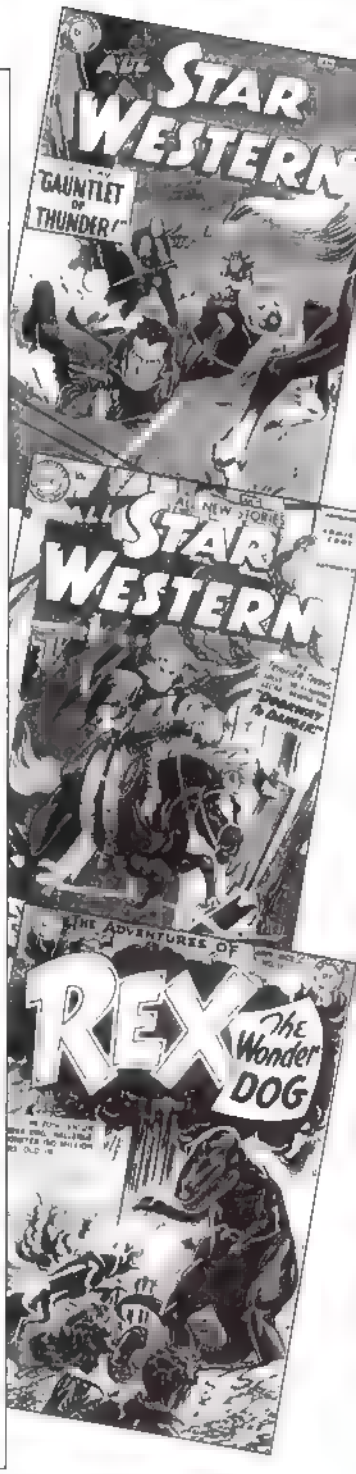
KANE: Julie was terribly, terribly uncertain, and I'm sure he was murder to work for, because there wasn't anything that he wasn't anxious to criticize. On the other hand, Kanigher was so impossible to deal with, all he ever did was put you down

I remember Wally Wood, who had worked just recently on EC war stuff, came in... and I remember it reminded me of a court-martial Kanigher was going over the pages, and Wally was standing there in silence because he was being insufferably insulted in terms of his competence. The same was happening believe it or not, to John Severin! In fact, it was demoralizing. My own feeling was, the worst editor I ever worked for was Kanigher, just on a personal basis. But he was a good writer, no question about it.

RT: How about some other people you knew back in the early days?

KANE: George Papp [original artist of "Green Arrow," later of "Superboy"] lived next door to me His brother Larry and I were partners; we used to draw

ALL-STAR WESTERN 59 June-July 18
WITH THE UNSUSPECTING GUARDS NEARBY, THE DARING DUELIST CARRIES OUT HIS AUDACIOUS PLAN...
CHEW--CHEW--NOBLE BEAST! FASTER--THE CAUSE OF JUSTICE LIES BETWEEN YOUR TEETH!
AFTER WHAT SEEMS AN ETERNITY OF WAITING, THE ROPES PART...
CABALLERO'S ESCAPING! SLAY HIM!
YOUR SWORDS SHOULD SPEAK FOR YOU--NOT YOUR TONGUES!
SEIZING THE SWORD OF A LUNGING GUARD, THE INGENIOUS FENCING MASTER TURNS TO FACE ANOTHER OPPONENT!
AND NOW, MY UNFORTUNATE ONE, THIS WILL TAKE BUT A MOMENT!
YOU'RE ONLY DELAYING YOUR OWN DEATH, DON CABALL--
IT IS NOT POLITE FOR A DUELIST TO THREATEN HIS OPPONENT! HE SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON A SWIFT LUNGE--SO!
D-DON'T KILL ME!
I DON'T BOTHER WITH INSECTS! LOOK AFTER YOUR FRIEND! HIS SHOULDER MUST BE PRETTY SORE!
SWIFTLY THE AGILE DON RACES TO THE SHIP AND...
THEY'LL BE EXPECTING ME BY WAY OF THE GANGPLANK--SO I'LL USE THE ANCHOR CHAIN TO BOARD THE SHIP!
6



In the early All-Star Western *Gil penciled "Don Caballero," as per this page from #59 (June-July 1951), repro'd from photocopies of original art, courtesy of Ethan Roberts. Later Gil inherited the "Trigger Twins" cover feature from Carmine Infantino (pictured is #89 June-July 1956) and later "Johnny Thunder," as per ASW #104 (Dec. 1958-Jan 1959). All this and* Rex the Wonder Dog *too! (Rex #11, Sept.-Oct 1953.) Like Gil says, incredulously: "I did those for about ten years!" [©2001 DC Comics.]*

THEN, A VOICE FROM AN UPPER WINDOW...
SEE, SPEEDY? THIS WAS WINSTON'S MOTIVE -- TO AUCTION OFF THE ARROW! BUT SINCE WE'RE AUCTIONING OFF ARROWS -- TRY SOME OF THESE!
THE FAMED BOOMERANG ARROW, WITH ROPE TRAILING, ENCIRCLES A GROUP OF CROOKS...
ZIP!

"Wildcat," and he changed his name to Phil Martell. His real name was Papparasky. When he was in World War II overseas he fell in love with the name Philip, and he always loved France, and he came back calling himself Martell

RT: After Charles Martel, I guess—"Charles the Hammer," who pushed the Moslems out of medieval Spain. Did you know Otto Binder well back then? He supposedly wrote

George Papp drew "Green Arrow" for years, as per this page from a 1950s World's Finest, *repro'd from photocopies of the original art, courtesy of Ethan Roberts. Papp also drew* Superboy *[©2001 DC Comics.]*

THERE'S STILL PLENTY OF FIGHT LEFT IN THIS WILDCAT!
I'LL CHOKE THAT OUT OF YA!
KOOM
NEXT TIME, BROTHER— HOLD TIGHT!
YOU CLEARED THE FIRST HURDLE, WILDCAT. BUT NOW YOU'RE FACING ME-- NOW DOES THE MIGHTY HUNTER OF CRIMINALS FEEL?
UFFF! NOT SO GOOD!
AAGGHH
BUT I HOPE TO DO BETTER!
YOU'RE KIND OF QUICK AREN'T YOU?
HERE'S WHERE YOU TAKE TO THE AIR ON YOUR OWN!
UMF-- FFT-T-T-- UFF!
SAVE YOUR BREATH, STRETCH. I'LL UNTIE YOU-- IF THE HUNTRESS WILL LEAVE US ALONE FOR A MOMENT.
THERE!
WILDCAT-- LOOK OUT! TH HUNTRESS!

As "Gil Stack," Kane did some nice "Wildcat" work, as in Sensation Comics *#71 (Nov. 1947), reprinted in* 100-Page Super-Spectacular *#DC-20 (Sept. 1973). "Stack" was close to Gil's real last name, spelled backward; he was born "Eli Katz." [©2001 DC Comics.]*

some early *Captain America* stories for Timely.

KANE: I met Otto, but most of the writers didn't hang around the production room. The only guy other than Mickey Spillane was that guy who had the agency that supplied Timely—Lloyd Jacquet. Dan Barry and John Giunta came out of Jacquet's shop.

In any case, comics was a very fluid situation, and we weren't smart enough, we weren't mature enough, to realize we were setting ourselves up for our life's work, and that to involve ourselves in some sort of formal technique and training was absolutely essential to begin to make a living and build a life! And the thing that I realize now is that everything you do is simply a part of self-development. It wasn't that we were building careers we were building *ourselves*, the kind of people we were going to be

What I regret is the informality... maybe that was the best part of it for a lot of people, but I think—

I don't envy Toth anything. Nothing. But I also recognize what the difference is: Not that Toth, on top of everything else, didn't have great skill, but he wasn't a genius. The thing is, it was possible for him to gain some sort of formal technique that would make life easier for him as he went from one situation to another. We were just too dumb, Carmine and I and Giacoia It's not that we were stupid, it's just that we were uneducated. We didn't come from the kind of background that would direct you toward formal techniques.

I see how *typical* we were, that's the thing. After fighting for a lifetime to develop some sort of individual personality, you see that there *is* no individual personality. Either you were part of your time, or you were typical of the kind of people you grew up amongst, and you do that kind of work. By and large, most of us were quintessential And it wasn't until we got to be older that we realized how important formal techniques were.

RT: You mentioned Frank Giacoia. I guess he had trouble working, not only as a penciler, where he swiped virtually everything, but even as an inker

KANE: It became some sort of obsession. He would sit in his basement surrounded by everything He'd sit and watch TV for weeks, years, and would ultimately have to call in me, or Sekowsky, or Giella, to help him finish the job.

RT: I remember one day, soon after I started working in the Marvel office in '65, Frank asked me if I'd seen the movie *Gungha Din*, which I hadn't, then. And he began to talk about how he'd seen it 30 or 40 times. And I was thinking, no wonder [production manager] Sol Brodsky has to drag him into the office and force him to ink *there*, because when he stayed home, he obviously did everything else *except* ink.

KANE: The big thing is, he always felt deprived He loved Carmine more than anybody else. Carmine always kept him at a distance—in my view—and he *needed* to The point was, all Giacoia ever did was want to warm up to him and become part of Carmine's group

RT: And they made a great team whenever they worked together. In the 1980s I had them do a three-page "Flash" chapter in an *All-Star Squadron* annual, and I just loved it.

KANE: Carmine always had, in my view, an idea about himself, sort of an exalted idea; he tried to live by that idea. In other words, he removed himself; he tried to be separate and independent; he tried to be surrounded by luxury and comfort; and I must say, beyond anything that I would have thought, he *succeeded.*

RT: Another artist I'd like to ask you about is Arthur Cazeneuve, whose real first name was apparently Arturo. He inked Kirby at DC around 1943....

SHERLOCK HOLMES
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
SIR HENRY BASKERVILLE AND DR WATSON HAVE JUST FLUSHED THE ESCAPED CONVICT ACROSS THE MOOR...
SIR HENRY! HELP ME! I'M IN A BOG!
HURRY! IT'S SUCKING ME UNDER!
LOOK, WATSON! LOOK!
LOOK, WATSON! THE CONVICT!

Frank Giacoia was listed as artist of these Sherlock Holmes *newspaper strips from September 1955, but the penciling here is unmistakably Mike Sekowsky's, with Giacoia inking. [©2001 the respective copyright holder.]*

KANE: Earlier he was the art director over at Harvey for years. What happened then was, he became one of the inkers during the War on Jack's stuff He disappeared after the War.

Jack, of course—the thing is, the level of his effort was so far above what was generally being done—well, I don't think Jack was a genius, but I do think he was an extraordinarily facile and inventive sort of guy. Right from the get-go, he was head and shoulders above the other guys. Even as time went on, and people improved their skills and involved themselves, nobody was Jack.

Before Jack came into comics, there was an androgynous super-hero, that was Louis Fine and Reed Crandall And Jack brought in a totally militant, primitive, Dionysian villain, super-hero, all styles of drawing. It was Jack's whole personality. I don't think anybody ever touched that. I just don't know if you could say it was genius.

THE FLASH FOLLOWS THE TAXICABS TO THE RIVER WHERE...
THERE'S THE ROCKPILE THAT GEORGIE IMAGINES IS A CASTLE. IT'S DESERTED OF COURSE. NOT A SOUL AROUND.
CLANG!
TAKE COVER!
WITH MY FRIEND THE CONNECTICUT YANKEE IMPRISONED IN YONDER CASTLE? NEVER! WE'RE GOING TO STORM IT-- NOW!
GEE! WHAT'S THAT YOU'RE PUTTING ON THAT KNIGHT'S LANCE, KING ARTHUR?
MY ROYAL PENNANT!

Carmine Infantino-penciled panels from an unpublished late-'40s Connecticut Yankee*-style tale; see other panels from it in A/E V3#4 Repro'd from photocopies of original art, courtesy of Joe Mannarino with thanks to J David Spurlock, editor/publisher of* The Amazing World of Carmine Infantino *This fabulous 200-page book can be ordered for $29.95 (plus $3 25 shipping/handling) from Vanguard Publications, 59-A Philhower Rd , Lebanon, NJ 08833 And, to find out about Joe & Nadia Mannarino's sensational "All Star Auctions," phone (201) 652-1305, fax (201) 445-3371, e-mail them at* allstarauc@aol.com, *or snail-mail them at 122 West End Av , Ridgewood, NJ 07450. [Flash ©2001 DC Comics.]*

RT: It all depends on what you mean by "genius."

KANE: Right. I just thought it was extraordinary work, especially for a specific length of time. It didn't last forever.

RT: I remember you cutting out of the interview you did with John Benson that I printed in *Alter Ego* back in 1969, that you saw Jack as only really *living* at that drawing board—that, at night, his wife Roz would just wheel him into the closet, where he would vibrate till morning when he could start drawing again. I've never forgotten that colorful image, exaggerated though it may have been

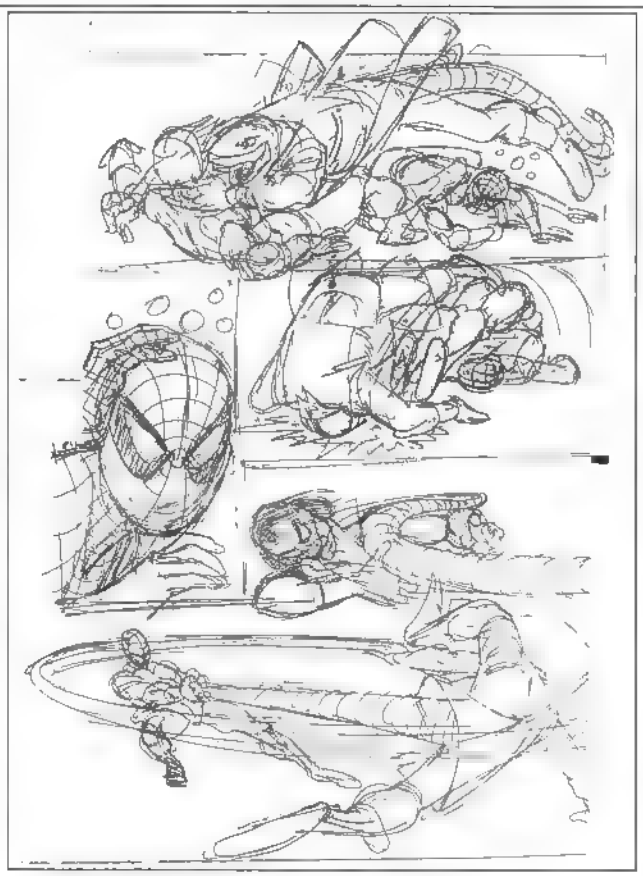
KANE: The image I remember most of Jack working—there'd be a logjam of pencils... dozens and dozens and dozens of little nubs, down to about two inches, that had been worn down by Jack, and they would be on his tabaret. He had that kind of energy that didn't cut into him—it was a release. It didn't seem to be anything he had to generate.

It was just like Harvey Kurtzman, whose insight into war stuff was different than just throwing a hand grenade.

Jack was a natural, and most of us were *not* naturals; we had to learn skills in order to compete and maintain ourselves. It's hard to do that. Jack had the advantage of being a natural—and then he *worked* like a son-of-a-bitch.

One of the things I see in comics is that the artists and writers are always *young.* Who was ever *old?* There was nothing we couldn't do! We'd get up at two in the morning, at five in the morning, at six in the morning, and we could work all day and all night. We could work around the clock, we could do a page in 45 minutes if we had to. We could do all of that.

But the truth of the matter is, now that the field is past middle-age, unless you're attached to some sort of an organization post, as an editor, there's no place in comics for middle-aged people, or people beyond middle age. Either you're young, or else, like Denny O'Neil, you're connected to a job that in effect stitches you to the mastpost Otherwise there's no way to keep on going in the business, because all it does is simply pitch these people off, and the field is still filled with young people, the way it always was.



Gil's layouts for a page from The Amazing Spider-Man *#102 (Nov. 1971), courtesy of David G. Hamilton In 1970 Gil became the fourth regular Spidey artist, following Steve Ditko, John Romita, and—John Buscema?! [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]*

RT: I know. When I was in my middle 30s back in the 1970s, I turned my back on that level of involvement. You start out like a new-born star in the middle of the galaxy, and then you're slowly and inevitably spun by centrifugal force, further and further out towards the outer rim of the galaxy. So you can't be surprised

...WILL DESTROY ALL OF THEM!!
WRAAA

much as a comic book. What do you get on TV? You get science-fiction, you get every kind of comic book crap that you used to get—exactly the same sort of fantasy, this sort of pulp idiom, that hasn't changed at all. They've just added the new technology that we all know about—you can do this, you can do that. It seems we're really in some sort of middle situation, where they've haven't resolved themselves.

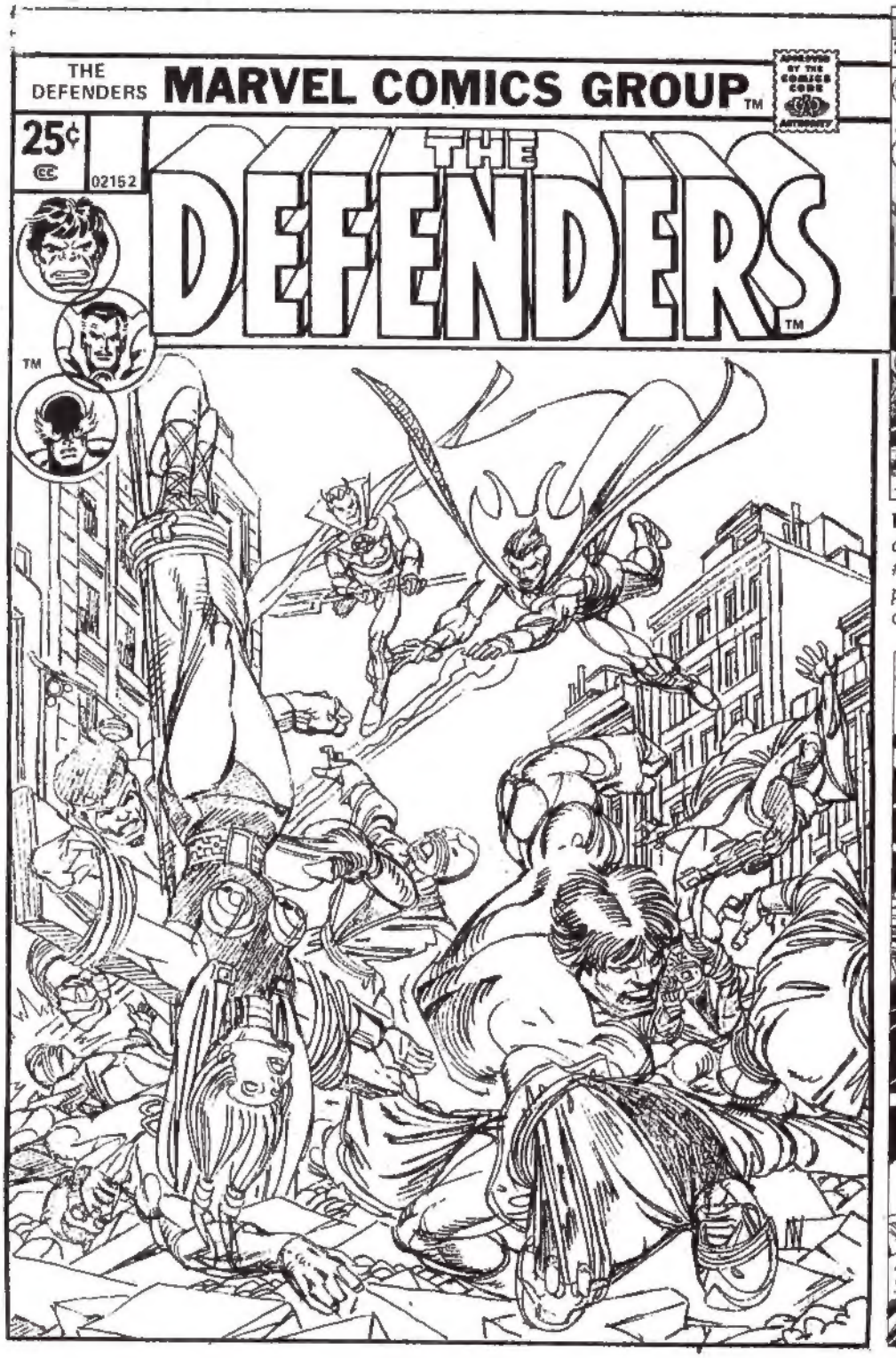
One thing I hate about this interview is the f*cking tone of it; it's so morose.

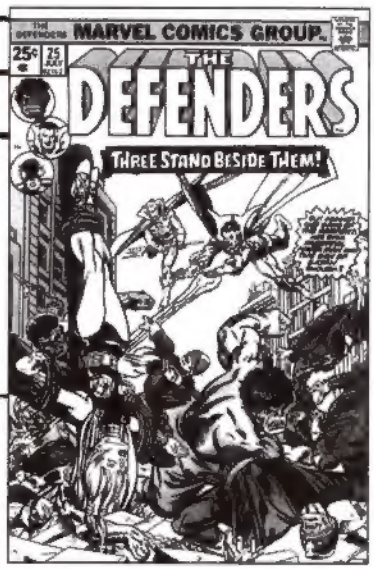
[And, on that cheerful note, or at least a few minutes later, we abandoned the interview, with the agreement that we'd talk by phone some weeks later about more of Gil's Golden Age memories. We never did—but I'm grateful for the time we did spend together during the thirty years from the late 1960s through the late '90s. I feel honored to have known him, and to have called him a good friend. And he was wrong about at least one thing he said above—because, dammit, Gil Kane **was** *unique.—***R.T.***]*

Fin

Gil Kane Art Gallery Extra!

SOME RARELY-SEEN KANE WORK FROM HIS LATER YEARS





Far Left: *Gil's pencils for the cover of* The Defenders *#25 (July 1975), courtesy of Bob Thoms. Final cover, as inked by Al Milgrom (?), immediate left. [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]*

Below: *Right up to the end of his life, Gil Kane was producing exciting work. The cover of* Isaac Asimov's I-bots *#11 (1997?) is courtesy of Robert Thoms. Repro'd from photocopies of the original art. [©2001 the respective copyright holders.]*

Right: *In 1979 the Belgian* Journal Tintin *published installments of Gil's science-fantasy* Jason Drum. *When he left the series in midstream, it was finished by the artist Franz. This work is unknown to many of Gil's American fans. Thanks to Daniel Tesmoingt, Belgium, for sending us exquisite color photocopies. [©2001 Elaine Kane.]*

JASON DRUM

RESUMÉ: Brusquement transplanté dans Ae Dann le lieu de tous les commencements, l'astronaute Jason Drum a triomphe d'un monstre fabuleux, mais il va lui falloir à présent se soumettre à l'épreuve volonté de celle que dans ce monde étrange on appelle « Reine-Lance »

UN INSTANT! IMAGINES-TU QUE JE VAIS ME RANGER A VOS CÔTÉS DANS UN COMBAT DONT J'IGNORE TOUT ?
TON RÔLE TE SERA EXPLIQUÉ QUAND NOUS ATTEINDRONS LA CITADELLE ET QUE TU RENCONTRERAS LA REINE-LANCE...
AU MOINS, PARLE-MOI D'ELLE... QUI EST-ELLE AU JUSTE ?
BIENTÔT, JASON... BIENTÔT, TU LE DÉCOUVRIRAS...
...OU PEUT-ÊTRE DEVRAIS-JE DIRE: "T'EN SOUVIENDRAS-TU"...

SUR CES PAROLES SIBYLLINES, KOTHAN D'AMTOR ÉPERONNA SA MONTURE ET, A SA SUITE, JASON TRAVERSA AU GALOP UNE CONTRÉE DE VÉGÉTATION LUXURIANTE...

Below: *The cover art, repro'd from photocopies of the original, to Topps'* Jurassic Park *#0, penciled and inked by Gil. Courtesy of Ethan Roberts. [©2001 the respective copyright holder.]*

Gil Kane, our friend and Roy's frequent collaborator, passed away on January 31, 2000, from lymphoma. The loss of this wonderful artist, writer, and raconteur is a sad one for the comics industry and our world at large, and he is missed terribly by those of us who loved him. And we're grateful, not only as friends but also fans, to have been able to spend as much time with him as we did. Certainly *Alter Ego*—in all of its three manifestations—has always been the better for having Gil's involvement, both as an art contributor and interview subject. *A/E* was fortunate to showcase the artist in its pages at numerous times, from featuring him in perhaps the most controversial interview a comic book professional has given (back in 1969-70's *A/E* V.1, #10), to his cover art for *A/E* V.2 #2 and V.3 #2, and Gil's interview on the Golden Age in V.3 #3. Gil's presence resonates in these pages. To him, we and most other males younger than himself were always addressed as "my boy." We are proud to be considered among Gil Kane's "boys."—**Roy Thomas & Jon B. Cooke.**

ROY THOMAS'
Legendary Comics Fanzine

Alter Ego™

Collecting the first five sold-out issues which appeared in the pages of Comic Book Artist!

Ever since its 1961 debut under Jerry Bails and Roy Thomas, *Alter Ego* has been recognized as the first and foremost superhero comics fanzine. In 1998 editor Jon B. Cooke invited Roy to revive *A/E* as a part of TwoMorrows' Eisner Award-winning *Comic Book Artist* magazine. Those *CBA* issues are long out-of-print, and *Alter Ego* has returned as a full-length, highly acclaimed magazine in its own right. This much-requested volume collects virtually all *A/E* material that appeared in *CBA* #1-5, plus more than 30 pages of new material never before available!

From the pages of the *Comic Book Artist* issues of *Alter Ego*—rare and previously unpublished art and artifacts by:

Neal Adams
Bernie Breslauer
Len Brown
Gene Colan
E.R. Cruz
Steve Ditko
Bill Finger
Ronn Foss
Gardner F. Fox
Carl Gafford
Frank Giacoia
Michael T. Gilbert
Dick Giordano
Grass Green
Ron Harris
Jim Jones
Bob Kane
Stan Lee
Norman Maurer
Shelly Mayer
Shelly Moldoff
Tom Palmer
George Papp
Marshall Rogers
John Romita
Bill Schelly
Arlen Schumer
Mike Sekowsky
Art Spiegelman
Mike Vosburg
Alan Weiss
Biljo White

Characters ©2001 DC Comics.